



**PHD**

**Respect in cross-cultural conflict resolution training**

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# **RESPECT IN CROSS-CULTURAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAINING**

**submitted by Diana Francis  
for the degree of PhD  
of the University of Bath  
1998**

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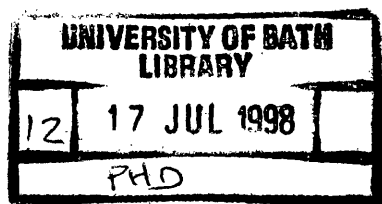
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I dedicate this thesis to my daughter Becky, who went ahead as a researcher and helped me along the way.

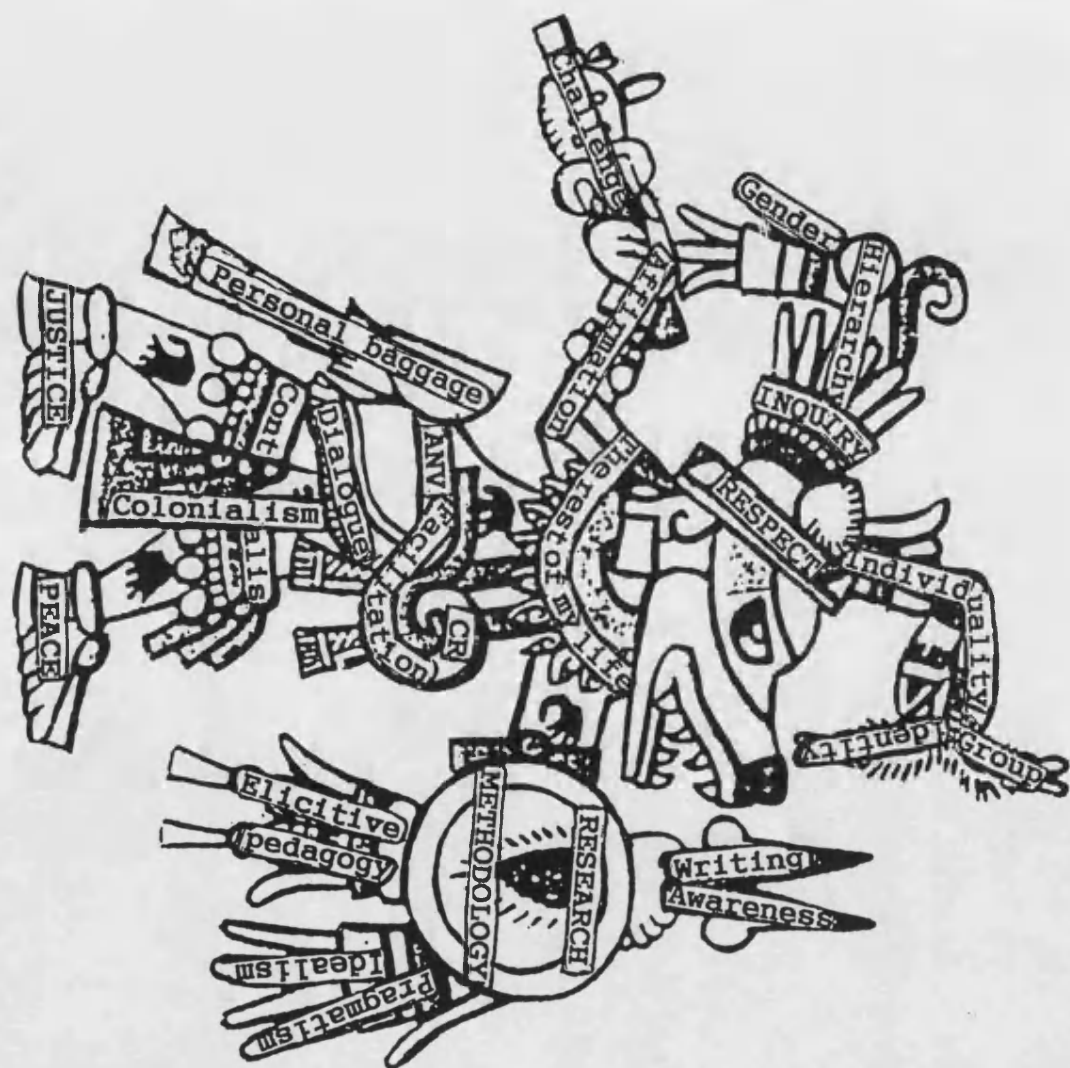
## ABSTRACT

The thesis describes a journey of inquiry, in which the researcher explores the implications of a commitment to respect in facilitating training workshops in nonviolent approaches to conflict, where this entails working across cultural boundaries. This exploration includes the concept of respect itself in different cultural contexts; the challenges of exercising the power and responsibility of the facilitator in the counter-cultural setting which workshops constitute; the development of theory which encompasses both attention to power and justice, and the need for accommodation and peace. In addition the researcher monitors and reflects on the inquiry process itself, and the development of her awareness in practice.

Through the eight workshops recorded in detail and nine others more briefly described or discussed, certain culturally influenced issues emerge. Hierarchical power relations and their effects, especially those related to gender and to historical, cultural and geographic power relations, are experienced in the workshops themselves, challenging the inquirer as an English woman working abroad. She explores the ways in which she has tried to deal with these and other conflictual aspects of her work, especially outside Europe, and the problems and doubts which remain, examining her own warrant to do the works she does.

Her theoretical positioning and contribution, and the overall content of her workshops, are presented and discussed. They reflect her concern to address power relations and injustice, as well as the need for peace, and her goal to combine the complementary strengths of Active Nonviolence and Conflict Resolution. The use and usefulness of the theoretical content of her work are tracked through the different workshops.

The inquiry confirms the researcher's view that respect constitutes a useable and useful reference point for her work, and at the same time demonstrates the complexity and importance of applying it in the context of cross-cultural training workshops. The researcher reflects on her own experience of action inquiry and concludes that perhaps the greatest challenge for her is to find self-acceptance in the midst of the different currents and pressures inevitable in her work. She reaffirms her commitment to her practice, convinced by her research of its usefulness, as well as its difficulty, and inspired by the courage and wisdom of workshop participants.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION: RESEARCH AND RESEARCHER

This thesis documents a research process which I engaged in because I wanted to understand better the work that I did as a facilitator of workshops in nonviolent approaches to conflict. At the same time I wanted to develop my capacity for awareness in action. I chose the theme of respect for this inquiry, and throughout my research and throughout this document I have followed four strands of exploration. The first has been an exploration of the notion of respect as a fundamental value for constructive approaches to conflict. The second has been my own attempt to live with the challenge of applying that value to the process of facilitation, working across cultures. The third has been the content of my workshop input, reflecting my positioning of myself in the conflict resolution field; in particular my attempt to incorporate some important insights of nonviolence theory. The fourth has been the process of the inquiry itself, monitoring my own thinking and development.

The relative importance and fruitfulness of these different elements of my inquiry has been unexpected. The one with which I began, the meaning and usefulness of the concept of respect in different cultures, has yielded some insights which are important for my work, clustered around a few issues; but more important has been the question of how to behave in the light of cultural differences: how to be a respectful facilitator - especially given experiences and perceptions of power. Furthermore, the theoretical component of my research, for which I had initially little enthusiasm or, perhaps, confidence, has engaged me greatly and seemed of real importance; which is one example of the illumination yielded by the inquiry process itself and of the discovery of new ways of discovering.

The methodology I evolved for following these different tracks is discussed in my third chapter. The whole inquiry process, from my registration at Bath University's Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice (CARPP) in January 1994, to the completion of this thesis, has taken a little over four years. I was going to say 'to complete', but could not, since as long as I do this work the process will continue. That is one of its effects. I will remain a compulsive inquirer.

In this opening chapter I want to introduce myself as the practitioner, inquirer and writer who has produced this thesis, and to give a brief outline of the work I have been doing, the way I approach it and the challenges it raises for consideration in my research. I begin with an autobiographical self-description, and includes the factors and events in my life that I consider significant for the work in hand. No doubt my choice of what to say will be as revealing as the revelations themselves.

## MYSELF AND MY LIFE

Who am I, then, the person who is doing this work and writing this thesis? What has brought me to this point? What are the personal tendencies, assumptions, motivations and values that I take into my work and my research? What clues can I give for the interpretation and weighing of my accounts and perceptions? What do I know about myself which will help me to weigh and evaluate my own initial interpretations and weightings?

### Childhood influences and their effect

I was born in Lancashire, into an English-Welsh household, in 1944. My childhood was in many ways very secure. I grew up in a family of stable, though of course imperfect, relationships, lived largely in one place and with a wide and constant network of adult friends, as well as friends of my own age. With this stable setting came a strong and stable set of values and expectations which can be best summarised in terms of liberal, middle-class norms and a radical, Christian ethic.

At my primary school, the values were very different. I remember the martial music to which we marched in and out of assembly; the nationalist songs and hymns we used to sing; the public canings and humiliations of pupils from the 'wrong' sort of home. The unkindnesses upset me then and now; but the other differences seemed unremarkable: just part of the way things were.

There were, however, complicating factors at home. It often felt to me that I was not dear to my mother (though I see this otherwise, now that I am middle aged and she is dead), which I think has probably undermined my sense of security. Of my father's love I was never in doubt, and I think in

many ways I modelled myself on him, and was by nature in some respects like him. However, this in turn had a major snag, in that the way I was and wanted to be was horribly out of line with how girls were supposed to be. I was, by girls' standards (that is, by the standards tacitly set for and by girls), rough, loud and aggressive. I was a leader, not a follower. I was rebellious, not docile. My parents, I think, did not reproach me for these things, but somehow I have grown up with a feeling that I am not, in some fundamental way, as I should be: that I take up too much psychic space in the world, speak too much and too loudly, am not selfless enough. My daughter Becky's own recent PhD research (Francis, 1996) suggests that the social construction of little girls as 'sensible and selfless' is very strong. As I read her thesis I felt a good deal of my discomfort with myself fall into place. I am aware of the possible ongoing impact of these feelings on both my behaviour as a facilitator and trainer, and my attitude to it, particularly in the form of anxieties around the place and weight I should give to my own input and understandings.

I have a very exacting and critical attitude towards myself, and this too comes, I think, from a childhood in which, it seemed, I was either warmly praised or deeply reproached for what I did. I am sure there was much that passed without comment, and therefore unnoticed and unremembered, which must have fallen into the 'OK' or 'good enough' category, but somehow that space for ordinariness has got squeezed out of my evaluation frame. I remember a rhyme my parents used to recite to me:

'There was a little girl who had a little curl  
Right in the middle of her forehead.  
When she was good she was very, very good  
But when she was bad she was horrid.'

This was, as I understood it, meant to apply to me. It certainly coincides with the way I thought about myself - and still do, despite all attempts to pull apart the implied assumptions and framing.

Another powerful element in the development of this 'either .... or' approach was, I have no doubt, my Christian upbringing, with what I took to be Jesus's clear call to perfection - 'be perfect' - along with his recorded assertion that whatever we did, or failed to do, to another member of the human race we did, or failed to do, to him. Since the human race and its needs were more or less infinite,

failure, I now see, was inevitable. I was brought up to care passionately about other people and their needs and suffering, so this 'failure' was deeply felt. However, compassion and feelings of responsibility also took a more positive form, motivating me to act for change, on the assumption that, if I had the responsibility to do so, I also had the power. My beliefs therefore gave me a strong sense of purpose, and along with it a sense of my own value, both for myself and for what I could do for others.

In the light of all this, it seems unsurprising that I should have grown into the strongly contradictory adult I described to colleagues in my CARPP supervision group after my first few months as a research student at Bath's..... This was the first piece of writing that I had produced to explain myself and my work and research to others as well as myself:

**'What I find when I look at myself is someone with a strong sense of being in the world - is that identity? - but full of self-doubt and blame, finding it hard to accept myself in totality, (sometimes even in part,) constantly undermining myself, and grudging about my strengths.**

**Though lacking in self-confidence, I have never lacked a voice -which means that people think I am self-assured and find speaking easy, which I do not. It often causes me great stress and is followed by new rounds of self-doubt. I think my words are drawn from me by engagement; and that I think is my strength and what I should try to love and respect myself for. I love people. I live in the interactions of the moment. I have a passion for communication and understanding. I care to an often agonising degree about the well-being and the suffering of others.**

**So my lack of self-respect doesn't impede my engagement as much as it might; but it clearly makes it more difficult and at times distorts it. Sometimes I am able to achieve a text-book balance between clear speaking and sensitivity; at other times I am too anxious to please, or turn to criticism of others (usually internal) as a comfort.'**

This personal baggage and these tendencies were clearly a matter of concern for my research, in which balanced assessment, interpretation and evaluation have been crucial. In the above piece of writing I continued:



'Looking at the way I have actually behaved in recent weeks, I think that by awareness and engagement I have largely avoided allowing my own negative feelings to have an impact on my professional practice; but I have had to go through tiresome and tiring struggles with them while off duty. [What I meant was that although I felt fine while I was actually working, I went through unpleasant bouts of self-doubt afterwards.] I sometimes think that too much self-awareness is a burden: certainly when it is not accompanied by self-acceptance.

Which brings me back to the apparent tension between respect and challenge. I need to be able to respect myself *and* challenge myself: challenge myself *because* I respect myself, and respect myself because of what I already am and because of what I want to be.'

If achieving balance in the evaluation of my work is one aspect of the challenge of working with myself, another is the self-care implied by self-respect. My parents, I think looking back, achieved a pretty good balance between care for others and looking after themselves: having fun with friends and with us children, taking holidays, going to the theatre, buying new clothes or furniture when they could afford it. Their attitude to money was that you should consider seriously what to give away, and having done that, manage with and enjoy the rest. I seem not to have absorbed this sense of balance, instead bearing in mind and heart what seemed (and seems) to me the logic of Jesus's 'in as much as...you did it not...' and 'when I was hungry...' as implying that any superfluity of money over need amounts to a theft from the millions of people who do not have enough to sustain themselves. This thought, though for me of religious origin, is reinforced by political analysis and general moral sense. I can find no answer to it, although I do not allow it (and this I say not with pride) to determine - as against influence - the way I live. It means that money and its use is an endlessly difficult subject for me, making the question of fair pay for freelance work extremely hard to deal with. This is one part of the overall challenge of balancing my needs with the needs of others.

My need to achieve such a balance stems from my sense of interdependence. This is not simply a matter of how I understand the world at the cognitive level, but something deeply felt in daily experience. I find it impossible to separate my affairs from those of others. I need to feel good about others in order to feel good about, or in, myself, which means that the question, 'Am I doing

this for them or for me?' is of limited use. To quote from the most famous of John Donne's 'Devotions upon Emergent Occasions' (1929: 538) - male language notwithstanding,

'No man is an island entire of itself.....Any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind.'

Individual identity is not separate entity. The experience of autonomy is both a fulfilment of individual potential and an illusion, since we exist only in relationship with each other and with other forms of being. So I think, at least; and this thinking was part of my upbringing. My parents not only talked it but, within their limits, lived it. It is a way of seeing things which makes boundaries a constant matter for question and debate, as I found in my research process - even in defining the focus of my research. Nonetheless, to deny the endless interconnectedness of things would be, for me, to fly in the face of experience and understanding: to disrespect what I understand to be the nature of being, and myself in the process.

It occurs to me, however, that convictions and feelings about interdependence are not my only motivators for action; that my desire to somehow tidy up the world - restore order to it (as if it had ever had the kind of order I am looking for) to see compassion and justice prevail over cruelty and tyranny - this desire, which has the urgency of a need, springs also from my own need to make some sense of a world whose hurting and hurtfulness I would otherwise find unbearable: make sense of it by making it make sense. This clearly brings with it the danger that I will find order where none exists, or want to detect progress where none has been made.

If my childhood and personality gave me an over-heightened awareness of the sufferings of the world, it also gave me, through home and church, the habit of integrating intellectual, spiritual and emotional life, together with a value for the physical and the sensual. Family meals were a time for talking, arguing: about theology, politics, what was going on in the world. Church was a place of worship, but also of wrestling with texts and dilemmas, and this wrestling was a matter of both heart and head. The concerns were passionate, focused on both the physical and the psychological needs of human beings. Theory or faith generated and encapsulated emotions and motivations for changing things in the 'real world'. Knowing or understanding was automatically connected to

action; and that 'understanding' was holistic, as the etymology of the word implies, involving the whole being of its subjects.

I have always loved thinking and theorising. My father and elder brother were great readers. I did read, of course, for entertainment and homework, but on the whole I preferred live discussion, and action, to the one-sided conversation of books. (They say what they have to say and I talk back, but I get no answer.) Acknowledging and dealing with this preference has presented me with problems in my research. Now, as then, the reading I have done, though not vast in quantity, has often been intensely engaged with, processed through conversation, and revisited in action. I am by nature a doer. From my mid-teens I have been involved in movements, in pressure-group politics, in 'direct action'. My parents were both pacifists and internationalists. From their values of compassion and respect for life came the twin goals of minimising suffering and maximising well-being, which in turn meant working, on the one hand, for the elimination of war, and, on the other, for an increase in justice. So, in my teens, in addition to involvement with development organisations like OXFAM and Christian Aid, I became a 'peace activist' (as I still am), attending nonviolence workshops and campaigning against war in general and nuclear weapons in particular. I spent a good part of my free time at planning meetings, on demonstrations, speaking to other young people's groups. These activities I continued at university and beyond.

## **Adult life**

I married a week after leaving Oxford and for two years worked (without training) as a junior school teacher - which I loved. I then spent a good many years at home with our three children, with my outward energies channelled into campaigning for peace, human rights and economic justice; later green politics. As the years went by, I got into nonviolent 'direct action' (usually, in practice, frustratingly indirect), for which preparatory training workshops were required. In due course, I trained as a trainer. More substantially, I spent a lot of my time facilitating meetings for drawing up strategies and plans. In these ways I re-absorbed the philosophy and techniques of nonviolence in, and in relation to, action.

When our youngest child reached school age, I became a steering committee member of an organisation called 'The International Fellowship of Reconciliation' (I had been a local member from my teens), and subsequently became its president. In this way I began to travel a great deal, meeting people from different countries and continents, all engaged in the attempt to live out the principles of nonviolence in their own particular context - sometimes in extremely dangerous situations, where the (often costly) struggle for justice was the central aim: nonviolent liberation struggle in the classic tradition of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Many of the most inspiring stories and personalities I encountered were from Latin America, and were strongly influenced by Paulo Freire's work and by liberation theology.

Two leading personalities within IFOR, Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr, had spent many years as travelling secretaries, working in Latin America, and later in Africa and Asia, leading training seminars for people (especially Church people) wanting to be engaged in action for social and political change. The evident power of their work to strengthen people's will and capacity for action was an inspiration to others - me included - to undertake similar work, which I did in a small way as I travelled as president, and in my continuing peace movement activities at home.

When I spoke to groups about nonviolence (and I did a great deal of speaking, to audiences large and small), I tried not only to refer to the two great gurus, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, but to tell the stories of some of the little known but amazing people I had met. Then all of a sudden, it seemed, the world scene began to change and the lonely status of Gandhi and King was transformed by the sudden accumulation of new, high profile and large scale examples of nonviolence in action. It began with the overthrow of President Marcos in the Philippines, largely by nonviolent 'people power'. Several of my friends played a key role in those events and the years of preparation which led up to them, including the Goss-Mayrs. At the same time, nonviolent action was playing an increasing role in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Again, IFOR colleagues were involved. Then came the breath-taking series of nonviolent revolutions that swept Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. People power seemed to have come of age. We were euphoric.

Little by little, however, the picture grew darker. The terms 'internal conflict' and 'ethnic conflict' became horribly familiar. Not, of course, that these were new phenomena, but that they had come

close to us in Europe. I began to have conversations with David Atwood, the then General Secretary of IFOR, about the need to go back to some of the founding ideas of our Fellowship and add to our focus on justice a parallel and complementary one on healing and co-existence; or, to put it another way, what was being described in other circles as 'conflict resolution.'

We had been very much preoccupied with advocacy and contest - entering into conflict, albeit in a mode which respected the humanity of all parties. Now we began to re-examine the need for emerging from conflict: the 'reconciliation' of our title. We held an internal seminar for staff and steering committee, drawing in Quaker friends to help us in our thinking. One of these, Adam Curle, first Professor of Peace Studies at Bradford University, and a man of immense experience in the worlds of psychology, development and unofficial political mediation, became a special friend and influence for me. At the same time I was beginning to be involved in committee work for Quakers, considering and supporting different mediation projects at the international level, while at home I joined, first as a volunteer mediator and later as trainer, a neighbourhood mediation scheme.

When the fighting began in former Yugoslavia, peace organisations located in Western Europe began to be asked increasingly, by groups in the Balkans, for support in the form of 'conflict resolution training'. Initially through the inspiration and efforts of Adam Curle and David Atwood, a co-ordinating committee was formed in London, so that a number of organisations with similar objectives could pool their efforts to respond to these requests. I subsequently became chair of that committee. Our individual organisations fell in some cases more into the 'nonviolence' and in others more into the 'conflict resolution' category, and as we searched for some common frame of reference for our work I wrote my first, very brief, paper, describing from the nonviolence angle the different stages of conflict which would require different responses and support.

As I approached the end of my second four year term as IFOR president, being clear that I should make way for someone else, I began to wonder what work I should do in place of this substantial, if unpaid, part-time job. Our children were more or less grown-up, and I wanted, belatedly, to grow up too, and enter the world of paid employment. I 'signed on' as unemployed and attended career development seminars. When our careers adviser said 'I think you should go into training', it made

sense. Although my experience in both training and facilitation more generally made me feel, despite misgivings, this was work I could do, I was aware of having no formal qualification of any relevance. When I enquired how I might fill this gap, I discovered that the only professional training diploma to be had came through a correspondence course, so I decided I had better just get on with the work. Then I remembered hearing about the action research programme at Bath University, and decided that this might be a way in which I could find a framework and support for learning by doing: by doing my work in a framework of intellectual rigour and self-challenge, and thereby not only obtaining official evidence of the quality of my thinking about my practice, but strengthening the quality of my practice and my capacity to go on improving and developing it.

By the time I joined the programme of the Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice at Bath University, I had been self-employed for one year under the title of 'Diana Francis - Facilitation and Training'. In that time I had worked locally with mediation and mental health groups and others, on particular tasks and skills, and facilitated 'conflict resolution' workshops in several contexts and places. Shortly before I enrolled at the University I had, with a Dutch colleague, led a week long workshop at the Anti-war Centre in Belgrade: my first workshop in a situation of actual conflict, which constituted an important step in my experience.

## INTRODUCTION TO MY CURRENT WORK AND RESEARCH

During the time of my research I have facilitated or co-facilitated many workshops which could be described as cross-cultural, on constructive approaches to conflict. They have been cross-cultural either because I was working with people of a different culture from my own, or of different cultures from each other, or both. They have taken place in Europe, East and West, in the Former Soviet Union, in the Middle East and in Africa, and they have involved people from every continent. My research questions, following the four strands outlined at the beginning of this introductory chapter, have been about the style, quality and usefulness of my work and the cross-cultural validity of the values on which it is based; whether it is useful to work across cultures and if so on the basis of what common understandings; how such cross-cultural interaction can be

respectful at all, when I as a trainer am of a different culture from participants and my culture is, in the world, the dominant one; and whether CR approaches, as embodied in my own theory, have anything substantial to offer for the empowerment of participants in their own situations.

In the face of such questions I have aimed to make respect part of my way of being as a facilitator, expressing itself both in the way in which I conduct myself in relation to participants and co-facilitators, and in my approach to learning and the way I structure workshops for participatory learning processes. I aim to offer a framework for the exploration of the group's own experience and wisdom, while at the same time respecting their desire to learn from what I have to offer, recognising my own depth of reflection and range of experience; acknowledging difference of role while at the same time affirming equality of status, and sharing or dividing power and responsibility accordingly. My writing will contain reflections on the effects of my own personality, my national and racial identity and gender, on my feelings and behaviour in this role, and the ways in which others may perceive me.

This thesis describes a journey of inquiry. Its four strands break into many sub-strands, producing a complex texture of reflections and ideas, based on events characterised by their own complexities and ambiguities. My research has produced more questions than answers. At the same time, I have felt uneasy that the tentative conclusions which I have reached are often confirmations of ideas I set out to test: nothing astonishing or radically different; rather an enriched texture of understanding. I hope it will be apparent that the testing was nonetheless open and genuine; and I have learnt a great deal in small ways, so that my knowing has, I think, become more nuanced and rounded, my respect more circumspect and deep, the content of my workshops more thoroughly useful for particular purposes and my capacity for inquiry enhanced by a greater understanding of what it is to inquire. I hope that fellow-practitioners and others in this and related fields will gain something by way of enrichment and challenge by sharing in my journey as I have described it, and engaging with the conclusions and further questions which the journey has produced.

I write in a variety of modes: introducing, describing, reflecting, summarising, and groping towards tentative and provisional conclusions for my own use and the consideration of others. At times I

shall advocate certain ways of behaving, addressing my self, first and foremost, but sometimes also speaking in terms of what I consider to be good practice, given certain purposes and values. I have tried to include enough framing for these different modes of writing to be clear for the reader, but at times they may merge and become indistinct. That is why I am referring to them in a general way here: to say that I intend these different voices to be there, since each forms part of my response to the process I have lived, and plays a role in what I want to convey about it to the reader.



## CHAPTER TWO

### POSITIONING MYSELF IN THE THEORETICAL FIELD: NONVIOLENCE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

#### INTRODUCTION: RESPECT

My work as a 'trainer', a facilitator of workshops designed to explore nonviolent approaches to conflict, is not only based on certain values and assumptions; it is carried out within a conceptual framework. I wish to explain those approaches and that framework in this theoretical chapter. First, however, I should say something about respect.

I made respect the focal concept for my research, because, as I shall outline in this chapter, it seems to be a value which in different ways underlies both 'nonviolence' and 'conflict resolution'. But its possible meanings are many and varied - which is why I felt I needed to explore them, and since I made this word (and what lay behind it) my focus, I should explain what I mean by it - or rather what I meant at the beginning of my research. One of the difficulties I have had in writing this chapter has been knowing what to include in it, here at the beginning of my thesis, and what to keep for the end and my conclusions. I have decided that in order to make myself intelligible for the reader, I have to include most of what I have to say about my theoretical understandings, position and contribution here, in one chapter. It is therefore necessarily a chapter which spans and brings together ideas which have developed during my research, gradually taking shape and making sense of themselves for me, through practice and reflection, conversation and reading.

When I began, I found respect difficult to define, even for myself, let alone in a way that would, as I thought, have some meaning and validity in the eyes of others. What follows is an edited version of a piece I wrote in the spring of 1994.

Essentially, I meant by respect the recognition and honouring of the being of others, both as - and for - being distinct, separate and individual, and as - and for - their part in the rest of being, their place in the scheme of things, their participation in the web of interdependence. Gerard Manley

Hopkins, whose poetry and ideas have been important for me, celebrated constantly in his writing the unique identity and interior patterning of every being (1953: 51):

'Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:  
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;  
Selves - goes itself, *myself* it speaks and spells,  
Crying *what I do is me* : for that I came.'

(In 'As kingfishers catch fire')

For Hopkins, in all the profusion and variety of individuality, one energy and principal of life and beauty is at work (1953: 30):

'He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him.'

(In 'Pied Beauty')

Although I would not use Hopkins' theological terminology, in his celebration of life, his reverence for it, both in its individual expressions and in its wholeness, he speaks for me. Translating this valuing (indeed, reverential) response to life into principled commitment and behaviour can be fraught with difficulty and challenge. In some circumstances it survives, at best, as a distant memory to cling to, in the face of contrary emotions and apparent practical impossibilities.

If respect involves the affirmation of both individuality and interbeing, it also, for me, at the human level, involves the affirmation of equality, however hard that equality may be to define. 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.' So runs the UN declaration; but what does it mean? In many ways individuals are clearly unequal - in size, ability, status for instance - and some are enslaved from the moment of their birth, their fundamental rights denied. So in what does this 'equality' consist? I believe this is a matter of both instinct and philosophy: a recognition that we are all in one boat; members of one human race, products of one evolutionary process and sharing one ecological niche, one place in the universe. We share both our dreams and our mortality, our capacity to decide and our ultimate helplessness. We need each other's solidarity, both practically and psychologically. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (whom I quote despite his gendered language,

because he still moves me) writing of his rescue from death in the desert, addresses (rhetorically) his desert rescuer (1995: 102):

'as for you, our saviour, Bedouin of Libya .....I will never be able to remember your face. You are Man, and you appear to me with the face of all men together. You have never set eyes on us, yet you have recognised us. You are our beloved brother. And I in my turn will recognise you in all men.'

It is this sense of being bound together and of an underlying common identity which for me implies some fundamental, existential equality, and the mutual recognition which goes with it.

The most fundamental form of respect, is then, as I see it, a response to humanity itself: the recognition that any other human being has an equal place in the scheme of things and the same fundamental needs as oneself - respect for what is common. A secondary kind of respect is accorded to what is particular: particular attributes; special innate characteristics, or learned skills.

This secondary kind of respect may be given or withheld on account of acquired or inherited attributes such as wealth, status or political power. For me, though I may admire and celebrate the gifts and achievements of individuals and societies, respect has a moral basis. While I wish to affirm the principle of essential human dignity or respect-worthiness, and respect that for itself, I wish to give additional, secondary respect to those who live in accordance with such unconditional, primary respect: those who behave respectfully. Our own individual honour depends on our honouring of the bond of shared humanity, which provides the best grounds for self-respect.

Without self-respect we are unlikely to find it easy (if indeed possible) to respect others. This creates a potential vicious circle, which it seems to me can be broken only by the experience of that basic, unconditional respect or regard which constitutes a kind of bottom line for human behaviour - to be maintained in the face of all kinds of provocations and disappointments, in spite of all kinds of unrespectworthiness. A society which embodied such unconditional respect for humanity would constitute, for me, a civilised society.

The balance between individual and collective identities and loyalties, and the abuse of both, constitute a key issue for respect which has been recurrent in my work. Western individualism often promotes personal freedom at the expense of social need. Collectivist societies often preserve social stability and cultural continuity at the expense of individual freedom. Both individualist and collectivist cultures can be highly discriminatory. Equality of regard is foreign to most cultures, in practice if not in theory - often in both. For instance, women are often respected by men, if at all, not as equals but as a kind of subspecies. Class and caste systems are near universal. People with disabilities are marginalised. Those with minority sexual preferences are described as sinful and often persecuted. Most societies are thoroughly hierarchical in attitudes and structures. Challenging these social norms is very threatening and can cause great offence. How, if at all, it can be done respectfully, has been one of the recurring questions in my research.

The many forms of discrimination outlined above may be understood as a kind of violence. Direct physical assault is but one form of violence, which also has structural and cultural dimensions (see later: Galtung 1990) and can be experienced as, for instance, hunger, exclusion or fear. My understanding of violence, based on the thinking of Freire (1972) and of Hildegard and Jean Goss-Mayr (Goss-Mayr 1990), is that it can be defined as whatever is done, by neglect or design, that harms or oppresses others, denies their true nature, or prevents them from fulfilling their potential as human beings. Violence to human beings, thus broadly defined, coincides in meaning with Freire's 'dehumanisation' (1972: 20):

'Dehumanisation, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also those who have stolen it, is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human.'

When violence is understood in this sense of whatever dehumanises, respect may be seen as the opposite of violence: as the recognition of the true nature and potential of others, the acknowledgement of their reality and needs, the will to make space for them and honour them. While violence can often be equated with injustice, and is the moral opposite of care, respect, by the same token, involves both care and justice: justice as a concept, value and goal; care as an impulse and practice, born of imagination and empathy - seen by Carol Gilligan (Gilligan 1982) and other feminist writers since (for instance in Head 1995), as the female counterpart of justice. The principle of justice and the impulse of care both call for action. Respect is a practical as well as

attitudinal matter, and needs the promptings of emotion - even when these are mediated through the reason and will.' In John Shotter's words (1993: 148), 'Behind every thought there is an affective-volitional tendency.'"

These, then, were the ideas about respect with which I embarked on my research. They have not, I think, been radically altered -rather confirmed; but they have been challenged and enriched in many ways which will be described and reflected on in coming chapters. In the meantime I will move on to a discussion of the theoretical framework within which I work.

## TWO FIELDS: BOTH-AND.

(Note: I will use the term Conflict Resolution as a generic one, and not to denote my position in relation to various issues within the field. I shall use the abbreviation CR. Since nonviolence is often thought of as passive, whereas I understand it to be the contrary, I shall usually refer to it as Active Nonviolence, abbreviated as ANV.)

When I first began to read about CR, I found myself constantly fighting with the literature. It seemed to embody endless contradictions and arguments which all seemed partial - that is, seemed to miss half the picture. Then I read a book by Norbert Ropers and in it I found these words (1995: 79):

'A great part of the specialist discussion about the methods of conflict regulation ironically follows the pattern which the adherents of win-win solutions like to criticize, namely the 'either-or' pattern of argument. This cognitive tool undoubtedly has its merits. In view of the immense complexity of ethno-political conflicts, however, some investigation of the 'both-and' paradigm might be just as promising.'

This expressed, more mildly, the feelings which had been growing in me. I want to take a both-and approach. In particular, I wish to extend the idea of complementarity to bring together two very different approaches to conflict, amounting to two different fields. Nonviolence and Conflict Resolution have, in my experience, largely disregarded each other. The tradition of Nonviolence, from Gandhi on, has constituted a radical counter-culture, while the more recently developed, less

radical, field of Conflict Resolution represents an attempt to find ways of dealing with things as they are. It is my contention that neither approach is adequate in itself: that they need each other, and that it is possible to bring the two ways of thinking together in a coherent whole and to benefit from their combined insights and areas of expertise.

Nonviolence and conflict resolution are both concerned with action to overcome violence and to establish what Adam Curle (1971), describes as 'peaceful relationships'; but whereas ANV lays emphasis on overcoming the primary violence of injustice, by nonviolent means, CR concentrates on minimising or ending what is often the secondary violence of armed or otherwise hurtful confrontation. Both ANV and CR represent an inclusive approach: one which sees the well-being of all parties as the desired goal. During the time covered by my research, I have aimed to combine the approaches of the two largely separate schools of the more radical and 'nonrespectable' Nonviolence and the more acceptable and academically established Conflict Resolution.

The thinking outlined below draws heavily on the theories of others, named and unnamed, absorbed in many different ways, and has been used and developed in my practice, in response to the apparent needs of those with whom I have worked. As far as I am aware, ANV has not been developed as an academic field in its own right. Its thinking, while underpinned by a few key texts from key people, has been developed and transmitted largely through a movement, and movements: through action, praxis. My own understanding of ANV has been acquired over thirty-five years, almost entirely by word of mouth and in action: through meeting with those who have given their life's energy to trying to promote and live it, and through my attempts, in small ways, to do so myself. I shall outline what seem to me to be the key elements of ANV as I have learned it, moving on to a discussion of CR, outlining the ideas and issues which seem to me significant and which contribute to the theoretical base I have developed for and through my work. I shall try to demonstrate that the concepts and approach of ANV are complementary to those of CR, and explain how I have combined the two fields of thinking in my own theory and practice.

My theoretical frame has been developed through conversation with colleagues and workshop participants - conversations about experience, about ideas, about books - and through my own reading and reflection. My reading has been characterised more by the intensity of my engagement with it than by its volume (though I have in these four years made my way through piles of articles

and chapters); but through my work, through meetings, conferences, committees and seminars, I feel I have achieved a fair view of the main contours of the CR field, and some of its thorny patches.

The CR field itself is still, relatively speaking, in its infancy, and draws on many fields. According to John Burton and Frank Dukes, writing in 1990 about the management and resolution of conflict,

'we do not yet have a 'library' - that is, a recognised literature and category of references based on agreed definitions of the field.... Conflict resolution is.... concerned with almost all branches of knowledge.'

Much has been written since then. The CR literature is rapidly developing, but the kind of 'holistic' approach which Burton and Dukes advocate would preclude any very clear boundaries for the field, since conflict is a feature of almost any aspect of human life. I am not attempting a comprehensive review of what could be regarded as the literature of CR; still less of ANV. The references I make will be brought in because of their formative importance for me, because they are illustrative of a particular idea under discussion, or because they exemplify well what I see as an important element in CR (or ANV) thinking. Different theoreticians categorise and relate issues in different ways. What I aim to do is to indicate the theoretical components and viewpoints which so far constitute my working base and which will therefore, I hope, be reflected in - and provide some points of reference for - the reading of the accounts of my workshops and later reflections on the theory and practice of my work as a trainer.

## ACTIVE NONVIOLENCE

### History and character

The work and writing of Mahatma Gandhi constituted the foundation of the approach to life and politics known as nonviolence. Through his action in the early anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, in the first two decades of this century, and his subsequent leadership, in the nineteen twenties and thirties, of the struggle to free India of British rule, he demonstrated and developed a

cogent, coherent approach - philosophy, strategy and tactics - for responding to violence and injustice, and acting to establish what he considered to be wholesome patterns of independent living. To do this he drew on the insights he found in his own Hindu background, and in the Bible accounts of the life and teaching of Jesus. He, in turn, became the inspiration for the work of Martin Luther King Jnr. in his leadership of the Civil Rights Movement in the USA, from the time of the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955 until his assassination in 1968.

Gandhi and King remain the two most visible giants of the nonviolence movement, but their ideas and example were taken up and developed by individuals and organisations across the world. Some of these organisations pre-dated the rise to prominence of either of them. For instance, King turned for help in training his followers to the US branch of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), which had its beginnings in the UK in 1914 (and which, much later, I served for eight years as President). In fact the US FOR had pioneered the application of nonviolence to race relations, and had co-sponsored a kind of Freedom Ride in 1947, which they called a 'Journey of Reconciliation' (Raines, 1983).

Two individuals who played a key role in the development and dissemination of nonviolence, were Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr, to whose influence I frequently refer. My knowledge of Gandhian and Christian based nonviolence (and my use of the term Active Nonviolence) I owe chiefly to the opportunities I had to work with them. One of their books, 'The Gospel and the Struggle for Peace', which has been translated into several languages, summarises the content of their teaching and the analytical models they use (Goss-Mayr, 1990). Their workshop materials were developed during their time as IFOR field officers in Latin America, and their pedagogical and political approach is heavily influenced by the work of Paulo Freire, embracing his notion of 'conscientisation' (Freire 1972) - the fundamental means for liberation from oppression. The Goss-Mayrs played a crucial role in the preparation of the mass nonviolent action which was decisive in the removal of President Marcos from power in the Philippines. This mass nonviolent action in Manila became a model for nonviolent 'people power' in the largely nonviolent actions which were to change the face of politics in Bangladesh, Nepal, and the whole of Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union in the years which followed.



The world of Active Nonviolence is a world of struggle, of protest, of action for change: change in power relations, in structures, in culture, in politics, and in the methods of struggle itself. From this perspective, conflict is seen largely in terms of justice, or the lack of it, and active nonviolence as the way to achieve it without at the same time denying it to others and negating the values on which the concept of justice is based. In nonviolence theory, to engage in conflict is not only in itself positive - it is a human obligation. According to Gandhi (1980: 81), 'No man could be actively nonviolent and not rise against social injustice no matter where it occurred.' For him, socialism was 'a beautiful word', embodying a vision of a new reality, in which 'the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, the employer and the employee are all on the same level' (1980: 75). He saw the world as divided into haves and have-nots, powerful and disempowered; a division which needed to be replaced by equality and unity. Violence could not achieve this goal, since 'permanent good can never be the outcome of untruth and violence.' There is 'the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree.'

For Gandhi, the overcoming of division in society meant that the oppressors had to be included in the 'permanent good'. His thinking is mirrored very closely by Freire's:

'This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well.'

In this way they would become 'restorers of the humanity of both' (Freire, 1972, p. 21). Martin Luther King, likewise, included white people in his dream for the future, proposing that he and his followers should act with enough love to 'transform an enemy into a friend' (King, 1969). At the same time the Civil Rights movement constituted a deliberate engagement in conflict on the part and on the side of black people in the United States, and against discrimination and segregation. When challenged with creating conflict, King replied that the conflict already existed; what he and others were doing was to bring it into the open, so that it could be 'seen and dealt with' (King, 1963: 85).

The discourse of nonviolence is often revolutionary. Peace News, the UK nonviolence newspaper, carries the slogan, 'For nonviolent revolution'; and in Freire's model of nonviolent liberation, those who engage the oppressed in 'critical and liberating dialogue' are the 'revolutionary leadership'

(Freire, 1972: 41, 44). The practitioners of nonviolence are (with, arguably, the exception of that leadership), almost by definition, 'ordinary people' - especially those pressed down upon by those in power - taking action on their own behalf: the 'blacks' and 'coloureds' in South Africa, taking action against apartheid; ordinary Indians struggling for home rule; the 'Negroes' in the Southern States insisting on their civil rights; Chilean peasants oppressed by landowners and employers.

Religion has constituted an important and explicit resource in the nonviolence movement: a movement which is at the same time political and practical. In an undated book entitled 'Non-Violence: weapon of the brave', Gandhi wrote (p. 15), 'I believe myself to be an idealist and also a practical man.' Gandhi's approach, based on the twin concepts of 'satyagraha', 'truth-force', and 'ahimsa', 'non-harm', was rooted in Indian tradition, which, according to Suman Khanna's fascinating discussion, is both deeply spiritual and intensely practical. In her words (Khanna 1985: 2), 'ethical thinking of a practical type has been there in India since the Vedas'. (Gandhi's emphasis on truth, at face value potentially disturbing, is more concerned with honesty and integrity than with absolute knowledge - which, he claims, is the property of God alone. See Bose, 1972.)

Gandhi's close colleague, Abdul Ghaffar Khan - who led the traditionally vengeful and warlike Pathans in a nonviolent movement which reached eighty thousand in number - was a devout Moslem, and his followers called themselves the Khudai Khidmatgar, of 'Servants of God'.

Martin Luther King's base was in the Southern churches, and his inspiration came from his Christian faith, illuminated by Gandhi. The nonviolence movement in Latin America has been built on Catholic base communities, sometimes with a mix of indigenous 'Indian' beliefs. In Vietnam, opposition to the civil (partly) war was led by Buddhist monks. More recent demonstrations of nonviolent 'people power' have been inspired and strengthened by the religious convictions and inner preparations of their leaders and groups: in the Philippines, in South Africa, in Eastern Europe and in the Baltic States - where although the masses of demonstrators were (with the exception of Poland) for the most part not religious, the churches often played a catalytic role and provided an umbrella for meeting and joint action.

When I was planning recently, with a Ghanaian colleague, for a conflict resolution training for African women, I asked her about the inclusion of a spiritual element in the workshop. Her

response was that to exclude a spiritual element would be an impossibility: that for African women life was a spiritual matter. In the secularised West, it is easy to forget that most of the world's people are still religious, and find their meanings in life, and their capacity to cope with it, within religious frameworks and value systems. Although there are many adherents of nonviolence who are not religious, and the Gene Sharpe (1973) approach to nonviolence would claim to be less idealistic and more hard-headed, in the words of the Goss-Mayrs, 'The nonviolent struggle is essentially carried out at the level of conscience' (1990: 27). Nonviolence is not simply a set of tools and tactics; not even a discrete field of human activity: it aims to be a way of life, inner as well as outer, through which the individual becomes capable of nonviolent action in particular circumstances.

In Active Nonviolence, then, both goals and methods are determined according to strong and unequivocal values, often religiously based, centring on respect for life and human potential, and on personal and social responsibility. Peace and justice are linked inextricably, and power is a central concept, understood both morally and practically. Engagement in conflict is an obligation in situations of injustice, and the focus of ANV is on the empowerment of one side in relation to and in opposition to another, while at the same time the adversary is to be included in the social good which is sought.

### **Workshop notes on ANV**

The following are notes on ANV which I have written as a basis for discussion in workshops. I introduce them here as a way of summarising what I mean by the term. I present them as 'one person's understanding, based on her own reflections on the thoughts, writings and experiences of many.' I should acknowledge, however, in particular, how closely I draw on the thoughts and words of Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr. I can still hear, in both of their voices, the phrase 'absolute respect for the human person'. I can hear it in the voices of others whom they have influenced. Here is my text.

**'Nonviolence can be defined as a philosophy, an approach to life, and to personal, social and international relationships. It is also the word used to describe the actions**

or behaviour based on this approach. Nonviolence is active, not passive, seeing individuals as responsible for themselves and for each other.

Commitment to nonviolence presupposes a belief - not necessarily religious - in the positive potential of the human condition, and of human beings individually and collectively: a belief that each contains the potential for good and has a conscience which can be touched; that the humanity of each demands respect, even when their behaviour does not; that respect, for self and others, holds the greatest power for positive change, whereas violence, in any form, leads to destruction and more violence.

The philosophy of nonviolence is based on the understanding that the outcome of an action will reflect the nature of that action; that in fact the action is itself an outcome. When people act, or react, violently, they perpetuate violence and violate themselves as well as the other. When they behave nonviolently, their actions already constitute, in however small a part, the makings of a new relationship or direction. Respect, therefore, in nonviolence, governs both the goals of action and the processes by which those goals are to be achieved.

To struggle to overcome violence is to risk harm. While in violent combat the harm is inflicted on the adversary, in nonviolence it is accepted, if necessary, by the nonviolent actors as a consequence of their commitment, in order to break the cycle of violence.

The aim of nonviolent struggle is to overcome violence and injustice rather than to win victory over an adversary, and to achieve an outcome which meets the fundamental needs of all concerned, so opening the way for long-term reconciliation.'

From these notes the central role of respect in my understanding of ANV will be clear.

### **Conscientisation, mobilisation and confrontation**

ANV's major focus is on what Johan Galtung (1990) defines as the 'structural violence' of systems of injustice and the 'cultural violence' that justifies and promotes it. Its task is to overcome these injustices, first (according to the Freirian approach of the Goss-Mayrs) by the awakening of self-

respect in those subjected to them, and an articulation of the nature of their condition. This process of awakening and understanding is described by Paulo Freire as 'conscientization', in which those involved

'simultaneously reflecting on themselves and on the world, increase the scope of their perception.....[and] begin to direct their observations towards previously inconspicuous phenomena'.

As a result of this new awareness,

'That which had existed objectively but had not been perceived in its deeper implications (if indeed it was perceived at all) begins to 'stand out', assuming the character of a problem and therefore of challenge.'

(Freire, 1972: 56, 57).

This is the beginning of the process of 'empowerment', which makes possible the next step of organisation or mobilisation for action to change it.

The first step in mobilisation is group formation. This involves the clarification of values, the search for shared understanding through joint analysis of the existing situation, and the articulation of aspirations and goals. Through these processes trust and commitment are fostered, and the capacity for cohesion and joint action in the face of pressure and attack. Next comes the task of devising a strategy for the accomplishment of agreed goals, and determining the methods that are to be used. In ANV, dialogue comes first and last; but dialogue when power relations are very unequal is unlikely to be possible with the directly opposing party. Those who benefit from superior power exercised in the form of oppression and exploitation do not readily enter into dialogue with a view to relinquishing the benefits of this relationship; so that a change in power relations is needed before the process of dialogue can begin. This change can be brought about through the addition of support - numerical, moral, political, financial - and an increase in leverage or pressure.

Communication, while dialogue is refused by those in power, will need to be directed towards potential friends, with a view to building support. As the movement grows, various forms of public action may be used to confront those in power and bring the injustice in question into the realm of

public debate, building moral pressure for change. Direct action to apply pressure to the opposition may also be used. Gene Sharpe, in 'The Politics of Nonviolent Action' (Sharpe, 1973), lists one hundred and ninety-seven forms of nonviolent action. In practice the forms are infinite, limited only by the imagination of those devising them. The overall purpose of such a campaign is to bring about a situation in which the relative power of the campaigning group is such that it becomes worthwhile in the adversary's eyes to enter into dialogue with them, with a view to resolving the conflict which has been brought into the open.

Touching the conscience of those in power is by no means ruled out. King wanted to turn his enemies into friends. But change is seen to be more likely to take place if attempts at dialogue are accompanied by the moral and political pressure of public or international opinion, together with sheer force of numbers and whatever practical (often economic) pressure can be applied, for instance through strikes and boycotts. Given its interest in this kind of power, as well as moral force (Gandhi's 'satyagraha'), ANV could be argued to encompass forms of coercion in its methods; but commitment to nonviolent means of struggle should imply that no means will be used which inflict lasting human damage. It is accepted, however, that the response to nonviolent confrontation may be violent and deadly.

In the light of the many bloody conflicts which have taken place in the last decade, in the name of justice and liberation from oppression, framings which categorise societies in terms of 'goodies' and 'baddies', or easy talk of fighting for rights must give cause for concern. However, ANV's tendency to frame conflicts in terms of oppressors and oppressed, making strong moral judgements, is accompanied by a commitment to respecting and including all members of society in its goals. This should, in theory, protect against the replacement of one perceived injustice by another. The nonviolence of its methods should reduce the likelihood of producing a blood bath. But ANV requires subtlety, self-challenge and great care in its application. To use nonviolent methods in an unjust cause could be seen (according to ANV's own logic) as a form of violence. ANV's proponents have always aimed to be realists as well as idealists: hence the attention to coercion as well as persuasion. Weighing the risks of action with the costs of the current injustice is an important aspect of such realism.

## **Constructive Programme**

Gandhi was not only concerned with the removal of oppressive laws and regimes: he was insistent that a parallel programme of social and economic development should accompany the struggle for liberty. (Narayan, 1968). Ghaffar Khan, his Moslem colleague, required that his followers should do two hours of social work every day. To protest against something was not enough; it was vital to know what you wanted instead and to work for it (Powers, Rogers and Vogeley, 1997). Thus the idea of empowerment which ANV promotes embraces not only the possibility of acting for political change, but responsibility for positive action at the community level. This, as I see it, is important in helping avoid the construction of ethnic identity in largely antagonistic terms.

I hope that this discussion of what are, in my understanding, key elements and aspects of ANV, will indicate to the reader the concepts and approach that I brought with me to the field of CR, and which I have tried to incorporate into my work in that field. I will now move on to a review of CR itself.

## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

### **History and character**

Conflict Resolution, under a variety of titles, is a burgeoning field for researchers and practitioners, receiving much recognition (as well provoking some scepticism and challenge). In her study of 'Conflict and Culture', in her full and cogent review of key literature and concepts, Michele LeBaron Duryea (1992) defines Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) as 'an emerging field embodying the principle of interest-based negotiation in generating consensus' (p. 10); one which came to prominence in the 1970s as a response to the perceived inadequacies of the legal system in the United States. However, she quotes Scimmeca as tracing the broader field of conflict resolution to 'four movements that began in the mid-1960's and early 1970's:

- '(1) New developments in organizational relations [challenging the hierarchical, 'top-down' approach]; (2) the introduction of the 'problem-solving workshop' in international relations;
- (3) a redirection of religious figures from activist work in peace-related endeavours to an

emphasis upon 'peacemaking'; and (4) the criticism of lawyers and the court system by the general public that resulted in what is known as alternative dispute resolution (ADR).'

This is clearly written from a North American perspective. A high proportion of the CR literature - and of CR practitioners - is of North American provenance. At the same time, the picture fits my own experience. I come from a 'peace movement background', and I learned some of my skills as a facilitator in the ADR world as a neighbourhood mediator. The work I do is probably most closely related - and sometimes overlaps with the world of the 'problem-solving workshop'. (International relations, I would note here, have been quite largely overtaken by inter-ethnic and intra-state relations as the theatre of conflict.) I personally have little knowledge of the theory of organisational relations, but the work of Friedrich Glasl, to which I refer later is an example of its relevance. Scimmeca's third category of 'religious figures' probably represents US more than European realities. In Europe that would often be 'post-religious'. The move from 'activism' to 'peacemaking' is one I recognise, and corresponds to a move from ANV to CR. (Maybe we just get more tired and less hopeful as we get older, and decide to 'make do and mend' rather than seek radical change. Maybe, too, we get more of a vested interest in the status quo.) Broadly speaking, then, Scimmeca's categories correspond to my experience of the field.

In the sections which follow, I will discuss what I see as vital aspects of CR, starting with fundamental attitudes and assumptions; then moving on to particular areas of understanding and processes: the ideas they embody, together with some of the questions which they raise. To do this I shall follow the imaginary path of a conflict, starting with the dynamics of conflict, moving on through processes for dialogue and negotiation, and on towards settlement, reconciliation, and the establishment and maintenance of peace.

### **CR's approach to violence and conflict**

The role of respect (as indeed of values generally) in the field of CR is, generally speaking, implicit rather than explicit. Although CR proponents are slow to take anything approaching an absolute moral position on violence, choosing a more pragmatic discourse, it is the proliferation of *violent*



conflicts across the world which appears to have given rise to the burgeoning of CR as applied at the interethnic and international level. It is not unusual within the CR literature to take, theoretically, a neutral, or even positive view of conflict as such, and to see violence as the problem to be overcome. Developing constructive ways of handling conflict will help to minimise violence. Norbert Ropers (Francis and Ropers, 1996), writing of the need to develop society's capacity for constructive conflict handling, coins the phrase 'civilised conflict culture'.

Chris Mitchell, in his chapter on 'Recognising Conflict' (Woodhouse 1991), draws on Galtung's concept of 'structural violence' (Galtung 1990): political and economic mechanisms which disregard the needs of so many in different societies and across the world, causing deprivation, suffering and death - the violence of 'injustice' and 'oppression' in the discourse of ANV. Mitchell discusses the notion that structural violence can be identified objectively. He argues that this view could be described as normative, in that those (including, notably, Curle 1971) who hold it 'are not afraid to make judgements about the existence or non-existence of conflicts according to their own criteria. However, the major contribution of this normative approach to conflict research is that it helps to underline a sometimes neglected moral dimension in the field.' (Mitchell 1991: 225). At the same time Mitchell points out that such judgements must, in the end, depend upon the subjective application of chosen criteria.

In spite of the distinction made at times by CR writers between conflict and violence, in the CR literature generally conflict and violence are very often confused, and 'conflict' becomes the enemy - as in as in the quotation above and in the term 'conflict prevention'. This must surely signify a high valuing of stability, and a fear of the violence which conflict all too often produces. Whereas conflict may be a response to structural violence, most political leaders who incite their followers to fight do so in the name of justice. James H. Laue (1990: 257), while stating that conflict 'can be a very helpful and useful part of society', goes on to say that

'violence could be defined as a form of severely escalated conflict. Virtually all forms of violence are pathological; indeed violence generally hurts weaker parties more than it does stronger parties.'

On the whole then, despite the assertions of a few that conflict may be necessary if structural violence is to be addressed, CR is far less enthusiastic about conflict than is ANV; and in contrast to

ANV, which is typically adjudicating and morally partisan, CR proponents adopt a 'non-judgmental, non-partisan and, above all, non-coercive' approach (Mitchell and Banks, 1991: ix). Avoiding moral hierarchies and partisan viewpoints, CR emphasises impartial, third party roles and an equal focus on the needs, aspirations and interests of all sides. Although CR is by no means value-free, it can be seen as relativist in character, while ANV makes strong moral demands on its adherents and strong moral judgements about the rights and wrongs of a given situation. Perhaps CR could be seen as representing the 'care' side of Gilligan's care-justice dichotomy (see above), attending to needs and relationships, while ANV emphasises justice and adjudication. Whereas there are situations where 'world opinion' would be clear that injustice was crying out for action, there are probably many more situations where the question of justice could be seen in many different ways, from outside as well as inside. In a world riven by hideously violent conflicts waged in the name of justice - conflicts in which any vestiges of justice, care and the basic necessities of life have been destroyed - CR's nonjudgemental approach has clear attractions.

### **CR's response to oppressive power relations**

ANV emphasises engagement in conflict in order to reach a point where dialogue is possible. The attention it gives to the subsequent processes for resolving the conflict is minimal. CR, conversely, concentrates on resolution and pays little practical attention to issues of justice and power relations. I say 'practical attention' because many references are made to these issues, and concerns expressed - as referred to above. Adam Curle (1971), who in some ways embraces both ANV and CR in his analysis and approach, defines oppressive power asymmetries as 'latent conflict' and outlines a process of education and confrontation through which negotiation can be made possible and 'sustainable peace' achieved. John Paul Lederach (1995), takes up these ideas. In his opening theoretical chapter, outlining his 'framework for peace', which includes justice, Lederach endorses the need for nonviolent activism and points to the danger that CR, in the way it is often formulated, can encourage the idea that conflict is to be avoided or minimised. He espouses the term 'conflict transformation' as including constructive engagement with conflict at different stages and in different roles. In the event, however, the chapters which follow are about 'conflict resolution'; in particular, mediation. Similarly Chris Mitchell, in the article referred to above, basically accepts Curle's thinking on the 'developmental sequence of human conflicts', but offers no theory on how

that development can take place in such a way as to empower the oppressed or be rendered less rather than more violent, and concentrating on intermediary roles.

## **CR and conflict dynamics**

While CR has little practical to say about the empowerment of weaker parties and constructive engagement in conflict, it has produced useful theory on the dynamics of conflict or, perhaps more exactly, the dynamics of hostility. (ANV, surprisingly perhaps, has little to say on this subject - in descriptive rather than prescriptive terms - though much hands-on experience and training in techniques for coping with specific behaviours in 'hot' conflict.) Ronald J. Fisher (1993) outlines a sequence of escalatory stages which begins with discussion (an optimistic viewpoint? In my experience conflicts often begin with an absence of discussion when it could be most productive) and goes on to polarisation, segregation and destruction. The aim of any de-escalatory process is to control the violence, control the hostility, acknowledge the basic needs of the parties, improve the relationship between them, and reach a settlement which meets their various interests. The point of understanding the dynamics of conflict is to see more clearly what needs to be done to intervene in destructive processes and turn them around.

John Paul Lederach's seven stage description of conflict escalation/ de-escalation (Mennonite Conciliation Service 1992: 35) follows a similar pattern. Starting from the ideal, from discussions in which despite disagreement the parties agree that they share a problem, Lederach identifies the next stage as one in which energies are diverted into personal antagonism. The third stage sees a proliferation of issues, so that the conflict instead of being about a particular problem becomes a general conflict between the parties. At the fourth stage the parties are talking only *about* each other, no longer *to* each other, at the fifth there is a tit-for-tat escalation of hostile acts and by the sixth the parties have reached a state of general hostility or antagonism. By the last stage the parties have become more or less completely polarised, so that cross-party friendship or non-partisanship is no longer possible.

These stages seem to me to describe well some of the aspects of conflict escalation. I am doubtful about the value of depicting them as consecutive. It seems to me that they often happen

concurrently, or in random order, according to chance as much as any 'law'. Chris Mitchell's notion of conflict cycles, despite the relative inscrutability (for me) of his diagram, seems to make a lot of sense (Mitchell 1981: 67). He sees behaviour as the trigger for hardening attitudes and their effects, which in turn give rise to more substantive issues and more negative behaviours. Over time these cycles escalate in their degree of hostility and in the level of coercion employed by the parties.

Friedrich Glasl (1997) delineates nine steps of escalation, depicted as a downward staircase, each of whose steps, once taken, is difficult to reverse. These steps are elaborated under the following headings: hardening, debate, actions, images and coalitions, face-losing, threatening strategies, limited blows, fragmentation and 'together into disaster'. This last phrase, together with the extremely well articulated and recognisable descriptions of the different psychological and behavioural aspects of the different stages, points to the irrational and counter-productive ways in which conflicts evolve; which to me suggests that the management and resolution of conflict will require attention not only to practical issues, but also to psychological needs and processes.

### **Psychological and political approaches.**

Whereas Glasl is writing about organisational management, I am convinced that the same dynamics would be present at different levels of conflict in the socio-political sphere. One of the debates within CR concerns the applicability of approaches espoused within contexts contained within the rule of law - approaches often brought together under the title of Alternative Dispute Resolution - to conflicts which have exceeded the bounds of such containment. For instance, Nadim Rouhana (1995: 260), questions whether 'the assumption that bringing adversaries together will reduce stereotypes, change perceptions of the enemy, and build personal relationships' can be applied to political conflicts.

'Even if such contacts, dialogues, and interactions bring about the desired goals, it remains to be demonstrated that interpersonal relationships in and of themselves have anything to contribute to the reduction of international conflict'; and 'By focusing intervention on psychological dimensions and on intrapersonal and interpersonal problems, third parties impose a level of analysis that ignores power structures, inequalities, and the parties' human and political needs. Reducing conflicts between groups, communities, and nations to a psychological level is not only futile but also potentially politically damaging for participants, particularly in the midst of violent conflicts.'

While I agree that it is essential to recognise the impact of power relations - social, political, economic, legal and military - and of practical interests and needs, it seems to me that the psychological aspects of conflict must be important; even, or perhaps most especially, at the highest levels of leadership, where the pressures of protracted violent conflict are most acutely felt. Adam Curle (1986: 52) says that unofficial political mediation

'is intended to break down the barriers of suspicion, unreasonable fear, exaggerated hostility, misunderstanding and ignorance that keep protagonists at a greater distance than is warranted by the practical or material grounds of their quarrel. Only when this has to some extent occurred will there be an adequate chance of satisfactory negotiations.'

Since all interactions and decisions in relation to conflict are made by human beings, at whatever level, it seems unlikely that the personal needs, fears and ambitions of those decision-makers would not play an important part in the continuation or resolution of the conflict.

As Norbert Ropers points out, interethnic conflicts often develop over a very long time and the 'process involves a variety of subjective and objective factors all influencing on another' (Ropers 1995: 21). Feelings about ethnic identity are used and fomented by leaders as a means of increasing their own political power. Ronald Fisher (1990) outlines Ralph White's exploration of the dynamics of the Cold War, in which he draws attention to the paradox that while everybody wants peace and hates war, war preparations continue, for other psychological reasons. White therefore proposes the application of 'realistic empathy' in negotiations: hard analysis of political and other interests combined with psychological insight.

It would seem unrealistic to think that conflict at the political level could be resolved without some solution being found to the political issues at stake. Theories and training menus which confine themselves to intra and interpersonal awareness and skills are therefore, in my view, quite inadequate as a response to large-scale inter-group and political level conflicts. But should political or psychological aspects of conflict transformation come first? It seems to me that they are, as it were, interleaved and mutually reinforcing: a little lowering of emotional tension, reduction in prejudice etc. may make possible some degree of communication on issues of substance; a little

communication and progress on issues of substance will lower emotional tension, reduce prejudice - and so on.

### **Needs theory and problem-solving**

'Problem-solving', as an approach to overcoming conflict, embodies what could be regarded as the key tenets of CR: that 'resolution' presupposes the inclusion of both/ all sides in any agreement, and that the parties to the conflict should participate together in the search for a mutually acceptable settlement. The process of dialogue which such a search requires can take many forms. One is the so-called 'problem-solving workshop, in which middle-level leaders from the different sides are brought together in a process facilitated by outsiders to the conflict - typically practitioner academics (Mitchell, 1996). Jay Rothman, writing about Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, claims that the problem-solving approach

'engenders a new possibility for shared motivations as key elements in the conflict dynamic that must be addressed ..... It enables parties to see that adversaries, like the self, are deeply motivated by shared, human concerns and that, unless these are fulfilled, violence will be perpetuated.' (Rothman 1992: 62)

Rothman's work and thinking are based on the 'human needs' theory of John Burton, which has become a central theme in CR literature. According to Burton and others, conflicts cannot be properly resolved - that is, agreements satisfactory to all sides (and therefore durable) cannot be found, unless the underlying, universal, human needs of the parties are identified and met: needs such as security, identity, recognition and participation (or, according to Galtung (1990), the needs of survival, well-being, identity and meaning, and freedom). These needs, it is argued, are 'nonreducible' and therefore non-negotiable. Positions need to be replaced by a focus on interests if negotiations are to be productive; but whereas less essential interests can be matters of compromise, the human needs from which they spring cannot. Rothman argues that a

'clear sense can be made.... that a needs-based approach, focusing on the 'human dimension' of such conflicts, should precede the interest-based approach in many contexts. To solve protracted social conflicts, parties must feel they will gain greater fulfilment of their needs'. (Rothman 1992: 45)

I am interested in Rothman's use of the comparative 'greater'. I have for some time felt that there was false logic at work in the idea that these basic human needs, being irreducible, were therefore non-negotiable. In a sense, of course, they are: people cannot be argued out of them. Equally no-one's need for security or recognition - or anything else - is ever met in an absolute way: that is part of the human condition. We have to put up with *relative* security, a *degree* of participation, and so on. What I believe is necessary in negotiation is that the fundamental human needs at stake are recognised (not necessarily explicitly) and receive what is felt to be an adequate response in any proposed solution: in other words, the process itself should meet those human needs. Security, both physical and psychological, as well as political, will be a necessary key to the willingness of parties to participate in talks. It may require secrecy, it will require a safe place and assurances about the nature of the process itself. Parties will not wish to relinquish control of the nature and degree of their participation. Recognition, including recognition of identity and what it means, will necessarily be part of the process; and participation is the corner stone of processes for co-operative problem solving. For me what all this amounts to is respect at all levels, both in the process and in any agreement for the resolution of the conflict: respect for the humanity of all concerned, in all its aspects, practical and psychological.

Manfred Max-Neef, contributing to discussion of 'The new Economic Agenda supports the notion of universal human needs and gives his own list (1985: 147):

'These fundamental needs are in our opinion the same for every human being in every culture and in any period of history. They are the needs for permanence or subsistence; for protection; for affection or love; for understanding; for participation; the need for leisure; for creation; for identity; and for freedom.'

He categorises these needs as 'those of having and those of being', which 'not only can but must be met simultaneously.' (He suggests that in the West we have concentrated on having at the expense of being.) While arguments about lists and categories of needs are potentially endless, I find these two categories, and the idea that they are of equal importance, useful. What seems to matter is that those trying to help in the search for solutions to conflicts should understand and try to address the deeper values and emotions related to these needs, which underlie and motivate the demands parties make; recognising that whereas needs may be universal the ways in which they are met will,

as Max-Neef points out, differ according to culture, and that 'being' needs are as important as material ones.

Max-Neef's insistence on 'being' or psychological needs is supported by James Scott's powerful work, 'Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts'. Scott lays his emphasis on the psychological aspects of oppression (1990: 111, 112):

'Just as traditional Marxist analysis might be said to privilege the appropriation of surplus value as the social site of exploitation and resistance, our analysis here privileges the social experience of indignities, control, submission, humiliation, forced deference, and punishment.....Resistance, then, originates not simply from material appropriation but from the pattern of personal humiliations that characterise that exploitation.'

'Dignity' and 'indignities' are words Scott uses repeatedly. The process of co-operative problem solving advocated in CR respects the dignity of all parties, reframing the conflict in terms of a joint attempt to find a way forward, in place of continuing assault. Thus it becomes possible for the conflict to be viewed inclusively and seen as a shared problem, rather than in terms of opposition. (Rothman 1992 op. cit.)

This idea of finding a new way of viewing a conflict can be described as reframing. For my workshops, as a written handout which I reproduce in my Workshop Content chapter, I list some of the reframings which the problem-solving process requires of the parties to a conflict. They are all, one way or another, current in the CR literature. The first is the one just referred to: reframing the conflict as a shared problem. Others follow from that: shifting their attention from past iniquities to future needs; letting go of fixed positions and focusing instead on their interests and how they can be met; deciding that a solution is possible, rather than impossible, and regarding themselves not only as victims, but also as having the capacity to make choices.

The overarching reframing to be made is to see the conflict in question as a problem to be solved co-operatively, rather than a battle to be won. The ability to reframe attitudes to conflict in these ways, and the will to discover and honour the human needs which underlie the behaviours and demands of protagonists, seem crucial to any constructive approach to conflict. But is it asking too



much of the parties to expect them to set enmity on one side? It would seem from the experience of practitioners (for instance in Oslo, preparing for the Palestinian-Israeli Peace Settlement) that such dialogue is possible (though bringing constituencies on board then becomes a problem). Such processes do not, however, address the question of power imbalance.

### **Power relations and problem solving**

Enabling parties to a conflict to let go of their self-image and public position as victims, and take on a role as choice-makers is, in my experience, a crucial if difficult one; but it does presuppose a previous adjustment in power relations if one party has been at a severe disadvantage, and indeed victimised.

In so far as CR addresses the question of power disparities, it is with reference to the role of third party intervention, rather than the empowerment of the oppressed or weaker party. Where the third party undertakes a facilitative mediator role, in the Alternative Dispute Resolution tradition, the only way she or he can address power imbalance is by seeking to maintain a process in which the weaker voice is heard, and any settlement is agreed rather than imposed. The Alternative Dispute Resolution movement was, in the words of Norbert Ropers (1995: 55), 'inspired by the civil rights campaigns and other social movements which aimed at the elimination of social injustices and a reduction in imbalances of power.' Yet the mediatory processes and services it developed did not include methods to adjust major power imbalances in such a way as to make mediation on major conflicts of interest a realistic proposition where relative power parity did not exist.

Facilitators of problem-solving workshops, like mediators, try to contain power imbalances within the workshop process, working on the principle of 'parity of standing and esteem' (Mark Hoffman, 1997) for all participants. This may be possible with the kind of middle level leadership usually involved in such workshops, who have the freedom that comes with relative powerlessness. If, however, this parity within the process is too many miles distant from external realities - from popular attitudes and the dispositions of power holders - the chances of any immediate applicability of understandings reached in the workshop will be slim. If one party will not be seriously affected by the continuation of the conflict, or the potential actions of their adversaries, the power holders in

that party will have little incentive to listen to proposals from lower down which take the needs of their weaker adversaries seriously. This leads me once more to the conclusion that CR processes can bear fruit only when the necessary degree of power parity is already present.

### **Power mediation; settlement and resolution**

The only other approach sometimes included in the discourse of CR, to addressing unequal power relations between parties in conflict, is that of 'power mediation': the intervention of a powerful third party, to 'bring the parties to the table,' acting as a lever on behalf of the weaker side, or in favour of a certain outcome. However, since that outcome will be an agreement judged by the third party to be either equitable or in line with its own interests, the 'empowerment' offered by power mediation is the empowerment of the mediator. The recent example often used is the Dayton Agreement imposed by the USA on negotiators from what was Yugoslavia. In the world of realpolitik, such a 'solution' may seem appropriate, if less than ideal. It may seem the only way to bring an end to continuing bloodshed. Yet at the same time it seems to me that, from a wider and longer perspective, it must represent a continuation of the problem, rather than a step in its solution. It is replicating and perpetuating the kind of power relations which have bedevilled societies for so long, and which have such a disastrous track record in terms of human misery. It is part of the pattern of domination (Eisler 1990), whose governing principle is that might is right, ignoring or overriding human dignity and need - if nothing else, the need of participation, the need to have choice about one's own destiny. There is a real danger that such imposed solutions will break down, or require such enforcement as to contradict any idea of what would normally be called peace. There is also a danger that new conflicts will grow in the future from the seeds of past suffering and hatred, and the sense of humiliation which comes from having had to dance to someone else's tune. Power mediation is, in my view, part of the methodology of war, not the methodology of peace.

While power mediation can impose settlements: it cannot 'resolve' conflicts. Some consider the concept of resolution as utopian. However, those who stick to the term do so with the conviction that in the end it is the more realistic approach; that a conflict 'settled' without resolution of what lies beneath the surface will in time recur. Some theoreticians opt for the term 'conflict management', with the idea that conflicts never really go away and that what is important and

possible is to manage them as constructively, or undestructively, as possible. I concur with the notion that a degree of conflict may characterise the relationship between particular groups (or of course individuals) indefinitely; indeed, that the absence of conflict from any relationship would be unlikely; but that is not the same as to say that a particular conflict or complex of conflicts cannot - or need not - be resolved. To develop what Norbert Ropers refers to as a 'conflict culture' (Francis and Ropers 1996) in which conflicts are constructively handled or 'managed' is part and parcel of developing a 'peace culture'.

### **Facilitative mediation**

Whereas 'power mediation' provides a route for the imposition of a settlement, facilitative mediation can play a vital role in problem solving approaches. The power of such mediation is one which has to be willingly granted by the parties to the conflict, and it is the power to hold a process, rather than decide on outcomes. It is the mediator's task to help the parties themselves to reach a shared understanding of the situation, to explore different options and to decide what will constitute an acceptable solution.

In problem solving workshops the task of the facilitator(s) is to devise and facilitate a sequence of joint exercises and discussions which will help the different parties to analyse the situation, understand each other's point of view and explore different options for the future. Decision making will not come within the scope of the workshop, since those with the power to make decisions would not normally see it as appropriate to participate in such informal dialogue. Such workshops can therefore be seen as part of the 'pre-negotiation' phase of problem solving, and the facilitators as mediators of a pre-negotiation process.

There is also a role for mediation in preparing the ground for negotiations through separate conversations with the different parties. This can happen as a function of power mediation, but in can also happen at the 'non-official' level, sometimes over a period of years (Curle 1986; Williams and Williams 1994). In these informal preparatory processes, the absence of political profile or affiliation on the part of the mediators, their political powerlessness, is what fits them for their task, rendering them non-threatening and enabling them to be trusted by the different parties, as having

no axe to grind or to wield. They must remain strictly impartial in the process. The only advocacy role open to them is that of 'being an advocate for the process of conflict resolution' (Mitchell 1993: 142). Laue also sees enforcement as a necessary third-party role - and here a distinction needs to be made between third party roles in general (which of course can be negative as well as positive) and mediation in particular. A facilitative mediator can have nothing to do with enforcement, though it may be some form of coercive intervention could pave the way for mediation in certain circumstances (Mitchell 1993: 140). Mitchell argues that a variety of different third party actors will be needed to fulfil a variety of intermediary roles and functions, including convenor (initiator, advocate), ensembler (empowerer), guarantor, monitor, and reconciler (Mitchell 1993: 147). It is helpful to make these distinctions, and important not to confuse different and incompatible roles.

### **Impartiality and advocacy; outsiders and insiders**

It is often assumed that constructive third-party roles will always be impartial. I disagree with such a blanket assumption. I believe it is made because theorists do not often distinguish between different phases of conflict, or take questions of justice sufficiently into account. This can easily be understood as a will for 'peace at any price'. If the aspirations of the weaker side are seen as legitimate, they will need somehow to reach a stronger bargaining position for genuine negotiations to take place. Once that shift in power relations has been accomplished, the most productive role for third parties may be to facilitate the achievement of negotiations. It may well be that those who have taken partisan roles up to the stage of open conflict will not be trusted to play an impartial role at the conflict resolution stage, and this needs to be taken into account. Advocacy for non-partisan causes, such as human rights or the protection of the environment, whereas logically it should be regarded as impartial, may appear in its application to disadvantage or favour one side. Again, this needs to be recognised by any intervening person or organisation.

What is striking is the degree to which the CR literature is written from an outsider's point of view, even when the outsider role is framed one of 'empowerment', ie helping insiders to act to improve their own situation. Ropers (1995: 44, 45), listing the functions of third parties in 'conflict regulation' categorises empowering or capacity building functions together with measures to change the conflict environment, under the heading of 'conflict transformation'. (See also Lederach,

1995, as cited above.) Training workshops constitute one such intervention. Their intention is to help those living in a conflict area to play a constructive role in that conflict, usually as bridge-builders at some level; sometimes as negotiators. Sometimes, when participants include members of different parties to a given conflict, these training workshops serve several functions: training in CR ideas and techniques; bridge building between the different parties to the conflict through their joint participation; and (usually towards the end of the workshop) some problem-solving work in relation to the conflict itself.

There will be many bridge-building roles available to would-be peacemakers who are members of a society in conflict. Mediation is often the first focus of peace-making ambitions; but situations of conflict can carry only a limited number of mediators! Moreover, insiders are often disqualified by membership of one of the conflicting parties. If, however, the underlying desire is to make a contribution to peacemaking more generally, to help reduce enmity, build communication and trust, and encourage constructive thinking and practical co-operation, then the possible forms for that contribution will be many, depending on the nature and needs of the situation, the motivation, capacities, resources and skills of the person or group in question, and their position in society and in relation to the conflict. For instance, one form of bridge-building between religious groups would be to facilitate the formation of an inter-religious council - which might well require some informal mediation, and certainly the use of mediation skills.

Given that conflict often needs to be 'waged' before it can be resolved, and that even in societies which are considered to be peaceful, conflicts of one sort or another, at one stage or another, are always in progress, I consider it important that CR training should include the skills and understandings which will help participants work for change in different ways, and to do so by nonviolent means. Too little attention is paid in CR thinking to the primary role of 'first parties' and the desirability of constructive self-advocacy. Negotiation training is, of course, designed for the parties themselves; but it is surprising how often trainers concentrate on the role of mediators rather than of the actual negotiators (see Lederach reference above). Trainees themselves often come with the preconception that partisan roles are somehow not to be seen as contributing to peace. Those who live in areas of ethnic conflict, however, are likely, *de facto*, to be members of one of the parties to the conflict, so that even if they wish to be bridge-builders they are unlikely to

be seen as non-partisan. Such actors have been referred to as 'semi-partisan' (Francis and Ropers 1996, and Ropers 1997).

In short, I would argue that the primary concern of CR, especially of trainers, should be for the empowerment of those directly affected by a conflict, with outsiders playing a secondary, facilitating role. A preoccupation with the role of third parties seems to me unhealthy, unless at the same time the primary role of the conflicting parties themselves is acknowledged and encouraged. This is a matter both of respect and of pragmatism. CR's emphasis on the role of third-parties and of outsiders constitutes another difference from ANV, with its focus on the empowerment of the primary players. ANV's limitation is to assume an oppressor: oppressed relationship between the parties and to neglect the needs and dynamics of situations where power disparity is not a prime issue.

### **Levels of action and conflict intervention**

In addition to distinguishing between different roles and functions within a conflict, it is helpful to distinguish between different social and political levels of operation. John Paul Lederach's pyramid diagram suggests that it is useful to think in terms of three different levels: the 'grass roots' level, the widest - most numerous - category, forming the base of the pyramid; the middle level of actors with some influence within society, and the top level, small in number, of political decision makers. (Lederach 1994). For outside interveners who wish to promote or facilitate the 'transformation' of a conflict, it makes sense, Lederach argues, to start with the middle level, since those it includes have some opportunity to influence both the grass roots level (too numerous for an outsider to address) and the decision makers (who are themselves too busy and politically constrained to participate in informal processes).

Ropers (1995), citing Lederach, makes his own divisions between what he terms the Realm of States on the one hand and the Realm of Societies on the other, and between, in each case, the micro level and the macro level - the micro level being that of particular activities and the macro level being that of structures and systems. He considers how action at the social level can support efforts at the political level, and gives examples. I believe that if further attention were given - by

internal actors and interveners alike - to the possibilities for mutual support, effectiveness in peacemaking could be increased. (I should like to be involved in designing and facilitating workshops for this purpose.) For instance, in Northern Ireland, it might be assumed that bridge-building community relations work somehow prepares the ground for peace; but did it play any role in helping to make possible the recent ceasefire? Could grass-roots work of any kind have done anything to help the talks on their way and prevent the resumption of the bombing? Did it help bring about the resumption of talks? If so, to what degree and how? It would make sense to examine such issues and explore the possibility of increasing strategic leverage and support between peace making efforts at different levels. Ropers (1995) raises this issue, asking how action at the societal level can support measures taken at the political level, and giving examples. A similar question could usefully be asked about 'horizontal' relationships: those between different categories of actor at the different levels; whether they could be better co-ordinated, and how they relate to the views and power (potential and actual) of the socially and politically inactive majority.

## **Reconciliation**

If the confrontational stage of a conflict has been concluded, with an agreement reached and, ideally, freely entered into by both sides (or all parties), there is likely to be considerable work still to be done, in order to restore some kind of psychological health to society. (Like most other things, this is likely to be a matter of degree rather than of absolutes.) To process the resentments, hatreds and traumas of the past, at the group or national level as well as among individuals, is an immense and daunting task when severe violence has been inflicted and endured. Without such processing, there is the danger that the bitterness that remains will erupt once more in the future, resulting in a new cycle of violence and counter-violence.

Here the volume of literature dwindles to a trickle. Reconciliation - maybe seen as the province of religion - does not seem to be a particularly popular topic. Maybe it is seen as too much to hope for, an unrealistic goal. My view is that to neglect it is foolish. To be sure, the first and most fundamental prerequisite is a just agreement between the parties: one which meets the needs of all concerned at both the practical and psychological level. Part and parcel of this will be the scrupulous implementation of that agreement, and sound procedures for redress when it breaks

down. Ron Kraybill (1996), in his thoughtful discussion of what reconciliation requires, outlines the following sequence of reconciliation requirements (my summary):

1) Physical safety (eg removing people from the site of conflict, inter-positioning of personnel between warring parties, protective presence, monitoring).

2) Social safety: a context in which there is acceptance for the expression of the emotions occasioned by trauma.

3) Truth-telling:

a) as naming and knowing the experience of suffering and providing the opportunity for those concerned to tell their own story, so integrating the past with the present and individual experience into the social, in order to make sense of what has happened and what it has led to.

b) as discovering, as far as possible, how or why things happened (in some cases through meeting with the other side).

[I would add here a third item: having the narrator's account heard and respected, if not agreed with, by the other side.]

4) The rediscovery of identity, with a degree of confidence which can allow for the admission of imperfections and diversity.

5) Acknowledgement of interdependence and a return to the acceptance of risk implied by trust.

6) Restorative negotiations, ie negotiations to address present and future needs, so restoring relationships, rather than allocating blame.

7) Apology and forgiveness



I would have put restorative negotiations earlier in the sequence; but in practice, like so many lists, these items indicate steps which need to be taken and retaken, processes which feed each other in interleaved layers. Some easing of tension will need to precede negotiations (as discussed above) and the healing process will not be able to proceed to relative completion until all the issues of the conflict have been dealt with, and all underlying needs met. This may include measures of reparation (whose effect may be largely symbolic, but which satisfy to some degree the need for recognition of wrongs done). Apology and forgiveness are probably hardest of all, both personally and politically. Maybe easier are joint acts of mourning, confession or purification; but where one side can be seen as the clear victim this will hardly do.

Changes within individuals and groups are not entirely dependent on the behaviours and changes of the other side, though they will have an important effect. In externally favourable circumstances, it is possible for a person or group to make such internal progress, in terms of a renewed sense of identity and security as to be less dependent on the other side in order to let go of victimhood and incarceration in the past.

Reconciliation is seen by Hiskias Assefa (1993) as a concept or philosophy which needs to inform our entire approach to conflict and to relationships at all levels: a 'reconciliation politics', which would encourage the building of consensus and look for common ground, seeking not to exclude but to include. Reconciliation in Assefa's understanding means a re-ordering of relationships within society and a new concept of governance: the creation of a social order which is characterised by what Curle (above) described as 'peaceful relationships'. Lederach (1994), Assefa's colleague and fellow Mennonite, describes an exercise in which participants in a training workshop have been asked to explore the concepts of truth and mercy, justice and peace:

'In conclusion we put the four concepts on a piece of paper on the wall..... When I asked participants what we should call the place where Truth and Mercy, Justice and Peace meet, one of them immediately said, "That place is reconciliation." What was so striking about this conceptualisation of reconciliation was the idea that it represents a social space. Reconciliation is both a focus and a *locus*, a place where people and things come together.'

If its analytical and practical focus is combined with sensitive attention to relationships between the parties, problem-solving can help rebuild relationships and constitute the first step on the road to reconciliation. Cultural sensitivity will help enable those involved to determine what is the appropriate balance or ordering of relational and practical elements in mediated processes.

### **Peace maintenance; violence/ conflict prevention**

(Note: What I would call 'violence prevention' is usually referred to as 'conflict prevention': see earlier discussion.)

If peace is to last it will require the maintenance of such practical relationships. The building and maintenance of peace will often require massive efforts to enable the return and resettlement of internally displaced people and refugees; to reconstruct infrastructures and buildings, rebuild economic life and social networks and institutions, politics and legal systems. Also required will be the development of a 'conflict culture' (Francis and Ropers 1996) which will enable constructive engagement with the conflicts which characterise human organisations and relationships, however peaceful. The development of nonviolent forms of conflict management and engagement can be seen as an important contribution to 'conflict prevention'. Such a constructive conflict culture would, in my thinking, need to be built on the foundations of some reasonable attempt at social justice: a society in which Burton's human needs (Burton 1987, 1997) are met, for groups and individuals - including the need for participation (therefore participatory systems and processes), security (therefore the rule of law and a healthy and inclusive economy), and recognition and identity (therefore social space for the expression of different cultures).

Ideas about what constitutes a just society are, it seems, on the borders of CR's territory, overlapping with political and social science, economics and development. In recent years, development agencies, including governmental ones, have been paying increasing attention to the impact of violent conflict - and its remedies - on the possibilities for sustainable development. They have also recognised that conflict often grows in the seedbed of deprivation and exclusion, and seen the role of development programmes in helping remove the causes of physical violence. Milton J. Esman (1995) discusses not only the way in which 'violence can destabilise the environment in

which the agencies operate', undermining their efforts, but also the damage that can be done to ethnic relations by the 'ill-considered provision' of foreign aid. These two sides of the conflict-development equation are clearly set out and powerfully illustrated in Mary Anderson's 'Do No Harm' (1996). Anderson argues, in addition - again with telling illustrations - that the way in which development programmes are implemented can have a positive impact on the handling of conflict, as well as (hopefully, given care) not making things worse. In recent work with the relevant department of the UK government, I have discovered that the development of good governance and political participation are understood as part of its work. Encouraging pluralism and the public expression of differing points of view on public policy could certainly be seen as part of the development of a 'civilized conflict culture'.

## **HARNESSING THE COMPLEMENTARITY BETWEEN ANV AND CR: A THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION**

Having reached the post-conflict/ violence prevention stage in my review of CR as an approach, I should like in this section to summarise what I see as the relationship between ANV and CR, and go on to present and reflect on the way I have brought the two together in my work, both for the purposes of training and as part of the wider endeavour to understand conflict and how to handle and transform it. First then, my summary.

### **Summary of the relationship between ANV and CR as I see it**

The relationship seems to me to be both sequential and attitudinal. Both ANV and CR seek to transform conflict, but they concentrate on different stages and aspects of it. ANV can be seen as beginning where conflict begins, with the latent conflict of oppression. It lays much emphasis on structural violence as a cause of conflict, and seeks the empowerment of the oppressed through conscientisation and organisation, providing a framework of values together with a wealth of practical tools to maximise the cohesion and effectiveness of action, offering ways to address the question of power without resort to violence. On this ANV is unequivocal: violence is to be rejected in principle. (The tactics of ANV may be used for practical reasons, but then it is hard for a

nonviolent line to be maintained when the going gets rough; and the impact of principled behaviour and the message it conveys will be different.)

Like ANV, CR is practical in its approach. Its theory is about what works; about understanding conflict in order to be able to deal with it. It lacks, or perhaps rather avoids, the overall philosophical base of ANV, and avoids taking up an explicit moral position on violence, while having a clearly implied commitment to its diminution. This CR approach may seem more pragmatic, approach, and in less danger of being judgmental; more likely to meet with a response from those already involved in violent action; also more accepting of human frailty, less morally demanding. (Is that more or less respectful?) The strong philosophy and ethos of ANV, however, may be inspiring and strengthening for those embarking on a nonviolent campaign in potentially very violent circumstances.

Despite the general absence of explicit values from the CR literature, CR seems, as I have suggested, to be based on assumptions which *imply* values: the assumption that violence, in all its manifestations, needs to be reduced; the assumption that the dignity and needs of all parties to conflict should be met; the assumption that solutions should be inclusive. In other words, respect should be afforded to all, both psychologically and practically. As in ANV, power should be seen as the capacity to bring about the well-being of all; as Rothman says (1992), focusing of needs offers a new way of looking at power: one which regards it as a vehicle for people to fulfil their own needs, rather than force other people to do things.

CR, like ANV, promotes processes which in themselves contribute to the diminution of hostility, recognising, as ANV does, that in some senses means and ends are part of each other. ANV concentrates on means for action by the oppressed, offering to those who are seen as weak a way of being more powerful on their own behalf. The fact that CR is becoming a well established academic field and is the business of mainstream nongovernmental organisations (rather than 'fringe', radical ones) presumably both reflects and promotes its acceptance by the establishment 'powers that be'. It may also explain its preoccupation with middle and upper level social and political leadership and with third party roles, particularly those of outside interveners - often, in this action-oriented field, the academics themselves. 'Respect', for me, includes respect for people's day to day realities, including their experience of power relations and their effect. To offer theories of

conflict which fail to address (rather than to name) questions of power and justice is often to ignore people's reality. To focus exclusively on third party intervention as the answer is to ignore their need - and capacity - to act on their own behalf. Training is one form of CR intervention which goes some way to addressing this need, but it is still often focused on third party and bridge-building roles, rather than on self-advocacy.

CR seems to do little to address the question of the latent conflict of injustice and oppressive power relations - despite the fact that many of its theoreticians and practitioners come from an ANV background. Nonviolence theory can contribute to the correction of this deficiency. On the other hand ANV, with its tendency to divide the world's population into oppressors and oppressed, seems to miss some of the subtlety, complexity and variety of human relationships and realities, and is perhaps too rigid in the frame and the modes of response it offers. The horrible rash of intra-state conflicts causing untold human suffering across the world at present reflect the multiple sources and forms of violence. In many of these cases, the 'ordinary people' have been set against each other by a powerful few who are motivated by personal ambition, while the grievances occasioned by oppressive patterns, along with the re-awakening of old animosities, may add fuel to the flames.

In such situations, 'justice' will have conflicting definitions, or be impossible for anyone to deliver. It is often said (I say it myself) that there can be no peace without justice; but justice is not an objective absolute, and in many situations there may, practically if not ideologically speaking, be a trade-off between relative peace - in the commonly understood sense of stability and the absence of physical violence - and relative justice. Those who opt for conflict in the name of justice need to estimate, as far as possible, the likely cost of that option. ANV insists that the means as well as the ends of struggle must be nonviolent, and that means and ends converge. I would argue that conversely also, goals as well as methods must be just for action to qualify as nonviolent. However, when nonviolent means of struggle are employed, at least the danger of doing lasting damage for an unjust cause will be greatly diminished. Moreover, the inevitable injustices of violent struggle, and the sufferings of those caught in the cross-fire will be minimised, along with the enduring hatred generated by violence. Developing capacities for nonviolent engagement in conflict must therefore constitute an important contribution to violence prevention and reduction.

Given the dangers inherent in the notion of justice, the idea of need, favoured by CR, can be seen as a useful alternative. While ANV concentrates on engagement in conflict, the contribution of CR begins, largely speaking, where ANV loses the thread, directing its attention to getting beyond the stage of open conflict by initiating processes which can enable the needs of all parties to be addressed.

ANV needs the expertise of CR in the handling and processing of conflicts not only when they have reached the stage of open confrontation. Even when action is still at the stage of 'struggle against the oppressor', internal conflicts will arise during the processes of conscientisation and group-building for nonviolent action, and the skills of Conflict Resolution will be extremely useful. Since dialogue is a core component of nonviolence, the communication skills fundamental to Conflict Resolution training will be constantly required; and, given that the purpose of nonviolent struggle is an eventual transformation of the state of injustice to one of true peace, all the other tools of Conflict Resolution will eventually be relevant. The final goal of reconciliation, the restoration of tolerably comfortable and comfortably tolerant human relationships, while excluded by 'realists' as utopian, is in my view vital, if future violence is to be avoided. It is included to some extent in the thinking of both ANV and CR (in the latter case partly under the heading of 'peace-building'), but perhaps needs further attention.

### **Synthesising ANV and CR in an overall depiction of conflict transformation**

In order to draw on the full repertoire of concepts, roles and skills offered by ANV and CR, and to present what I felt to be a satisfactory synthesis of the two overall approaches, clearly and succinctly (and at the same time to make greater sense of it all myself), I developed a diagram, and accompanying text, which related the key concepts and processes of the two fields to what can be seen as stages of conflict, before and after the stage of open confrontation. This diagram had its beginnings when I was starting to work as a freelance facilitator and trainer, and one of my first pieces of work was with an international group of students taking part in a term-long course entitled 'Working with Conflict'. I was brought in half way through, to facilitate a two day slot on 'nonviolent action for change'. I wanted to explain how I saw the relationship between this and the course as whole. I remembered a diagram from a book by Adam Curle (1971), in which he plotted

the stages of conflict from the latent conflict of oppression, through the awakening of awareness and confrontation, to negotiation and sustainable peace. I found (and still find) the diagram, for all its simplicity, difficult to follow, but the stages it described offered a framework for my own explanation; so I made my own diagram, which from my point of view was easier to understand, being linear; and it seemed useful to the students.

That rudimentary diagram became, in turn, the basis for the much fuller one I developed with a colleague, Guus Meijer, at a seminar in Nalchik, in the North Caucasus, in response to a request from participants that we should do something to address the question of power. The new, more elaborate diagram we presented under the title 'Power and conflict resolution: the wider picture'. It elicited an enthusiastic response from participants, who nicknamed it 'the snake' and readily located themselves on it, and we went on to explore possibilities for increasing the power of oppressed groups, working on participants' own cases and using the 'models for empowerment' of Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr (1990 - see Chapter Four). Since then I have used this diagram in some way in most of my workshops, both for itself, to facilitate discussion of stages of conflict: the challenges they present and the range of responses which can be made - and as a framework for structuring the workshop agenda as a whole.

The diagram depicts the different potential phases of a conflict, delineating the route by which a group with little or no power, identifying its situation as one of injustice or oppression, may become more powerful, for and through engagement in open conflict, to the extent that they become a 'force to be reckoned with' - taken seriously as negotiation partners in a process of conflict resolution. The diagram is not intended as representing the one and only route into and through conflict, but as one way of representing one possible route. It is a model for working through conflict - transforming it - from the hidden conflict (pre-conflict) stage of 'quiet' oppression, up to and beyond open conflict or confrontation and its subsequent settlement, and through to the rebuilding and maintenance of a social infrastructure which can prevent the emergence of new forms of oppression, and new outbreaks of destructive conflict.

I have been asked (see Chapter Eight) whether the diagram is intended to be descriptive or prescriptive, and I think it can be looked at in both ways. It describes, I believe, the way in which certain things become possible: what needs to have taken place before something else can follow.

In that sense it is descriptive. It also describes, broadly, the pattern conflicts often follow. It does not, however, describe all eventualities: for instance, what happens when one side wins outright and uses its victory to humiliate and marginalise - or even liquidate - the losers. It embodies certain value-related assumptions: for example, that oppression is a form of violence (often enforced by physical violence), a condition which calls for change, as well as being inherently unstable. The diagram therefore embodies my wish to present as desirable the transformation of the hidden or latent conflict of oppression into the form of open conflict. It expresses my fundamental assumption that it is not conflict which is destructive or bad, but violence, which takes many forms, and that it is often necessary to bring conflict into the open and engage in it, in order to change things for the better - that is to create relationships and conditions in which different groups are able to flourish.

The most important use I have made of the diagram has been as a 'visual aid' in workshops; usually drawn with felt pens (sometimes in two languages) on very big paper, so that changes can be made to it there and then, in response to the ideas of participants. However, I have a duplicated version for them to take away, and a text to go with it. Here they are.

## **'STAGES AND PROCESSES IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION**

**The following diagram describes the stages and processes which will usually need to be passed through, if a situation of oppression, with an extreme imbalance of power, is to be transformed into one of genuine peace. (The words contained in the round or oval shapes describe conflict stages, while those contained in rectangles describe the actions or processes by which new stages are reached.) The 'stages' are not in themselves static: they have their own dynamics; and in practice they may merge with one another. Neither are they likely to follow each other in a clear and orderly sequence. It will often be a case of 'two steps forward and one step back', or even vice versa; and frequently processes need to be repeated, built on, reinforced by other processes, in order to bring about substantial progress.**

**In addition, large scale conflicts are not simple or single affairs, but usually involve multiplicities of issues, parties and sub-parties. They will in all likelihood also involve conflicts and power struggles within as well as between parties, and the stages of these internal conflicts may well not coincide with the stage the overall conflict has**



reached. Nonetheless, this simplified diagram may provide a useful framework for thinking about the stages of conflict and shifting power relations.

The diagram begins with a situation in which the oppression is so complete that the conflict is hidden or latent, the oppressed group remaining passive in the face of extreme injustice or structural violence (often maintained by physical violence, or the threat of it). They may remain passive because of tradition, or lack of awareness, or because the power imbalance is such that they have no chance of being taken seriously in any demands or requests they might make. In order for this to change, some individual or group will need to begin to reflect upon, understand and articulate what is happening, and encourage others to do the same: a process described in the liberation language of Latin America as 'conscientisation'. This process will, if it generates sufficient determination, lead to the formation of groups committed to change. Their first task will be to continue the process of reflection and analysis, formulating a common purpose and strategy, then developing organisationally as they begin to take action to build support and so increase their relative power.

Some groups choose to use violence in their struggle; for others violence is not considered, or is not seen as a practical option; for yet others it is a matter of clear strategic choice and/or principle to act nonviolently.

As their power and visibility increases, as their voice begins to be heard, these groups will increasingly be seen as a threat by those in power, and a stage of open confrontation becomes inevitable - a stage which may well involve repressive measures, including physical violence, on the part of the oppressive power holders, even if the oppressed group have opted to act nonviolently. During this stage of open conflict, the relationship in power between the opposing parties will change as a result of their ongoing confrontation and other developments inside the parties or in the wider environment. Even if the confrontation takes the form of armed conflict, eventually a road back to dialogue has to be found. Once the oppressed group have increased their relative power or leverage sufficiently, they can expect to be taken seriously as partners in dialogue.

At this stage it is possible to begin the processes grouped together and described as 'conflict resolution', in which communications are somehow restored and settlements reached. This will not be a smooth process: talks may break down, agreements may be broken, the conflict may flare up again. Non-partisan intervention can help, for instance in the form of mediation, both in preparing the parties for negotiation and

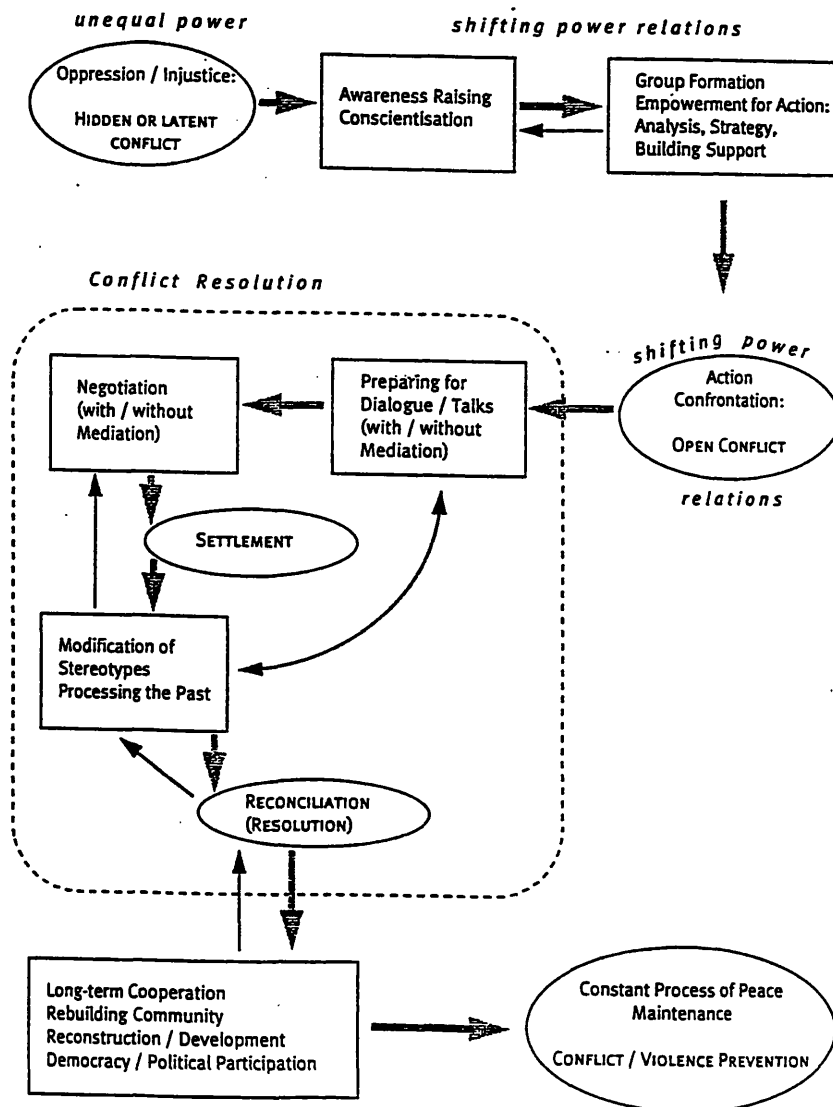
in the negotiations themselves. And through the work of preparing the ground, and through face to face dialogue, some of the heat may be taken out of the situation, some more hope and trust generated, some of the prejudice dissipated; which in turn will facilitate the reaching of and adherence to agreements. Once these are in place, it may be possible to begin to deal with some of the remaining psychological damage which the conflict and its causes have occasioned, and to develop more positive relationships between the previously conflicting groups.

These more positive relationships will be consolidated by projects for long-term co-operation for the well-being of the community as a whole, and by finding expression in the institutions and processes of society. But societies never remain static, and the final phase of 'peace' will need to be, in fact, a process (made up of a thousand processes) of maintaining awareness, of education, management of differences, and adjustment and engagement at all levels, so that some new situation of oppression - or other major source of conflict - does not develop, and just and peaceful relationships are maintained.

**Note:** Extreme imbalances of power are not the only starting point for the route to open conflict. The stages and processes leading to it may begin elsewhere. But questions of power and justice need to be taken into account in any consideration of conflict and how to engage in or respond to it. On the one hand, the untimely 'resolution' of conflict may mean in practice the suppression of just aspirations: 'pacification' rather than 'peacemaking'; on the other hand, those wishing to enter into conflict in the name of a just cause need to do so with some understanding of the likely cost to all concerned, and of their current and future possibilities, in the light of the distribution of power.'

See next page for diagram.

## Stages and Processes in Conflict Transformation



The final phase shown on the diagram indicates what is needed for the prevention of violent conflict in the future. This includes the development of a constructive 'conflict culture', and the prevention of the kind of oppressive situation with which the diagram begins. In this sense 'peace building' and 'conflict prevention' amount to the same thing.

The note I make in the text about the choice between violence and nonviolence would be a matter of some discussion in a workshop: sometimes major discussion. However, since my workshops and theorising are concerned with constructive rather than destructive approaches to conflict, and since

one key objective of 'conflict transformation' theory is to offer alternatives to violence, the nonviolent option is, for the purposes for which the diagram and text are intended, to be considered the preferred one. It cannot, however, be taken for granted, and the 'conflict resolution' phase outlined on the diagram is relevant for working through conflicts which have involved direct physical violence, as well as for those which have not.

No diagram can include all considerations, cover all eventualities, or represent all the ambiguities, nuances and complexities which characterise lived experience. In real life, as against diagrams - as I indicate in the text - stages and processes are not clear-cut and separate; they do not begin here or end there, but merge. They do not flow smoothly forward, but have their own unpredictable dynamics. They are unlikely to follow each other in a clear and orderly sequence. Likewise, the growth of a movement for change is often a confused and unpredictable affair, prey to the whims, ambitions and manipulations of political entrepreneurs and demagogues, and swept aside or along by outside events beyond the control of those directly concerned. Likewise, the impact and outcome of action taken will be affected by many extraneous, ungovernable forces, as well as by the choices of some or all of the members of a given group. The power struggle which ensues may send the oppressed group back to square one; or it may be so protracted that surrounding circumstances may change, with unforeseen effects.

Moreover, large scale conflicts are not simple or single affairs. They usually involve multiplicities of issues, parties and sub-parties. They are likely to involve conflicts and power struggles within as well as between parties, and the stages of these internal conflicts may well not coincide with the stage the overall conflict has reached. The majority in a particular group may be ready for settlement with their original adversary, but facing a new threat from internal opposition. Even a 'peaceful' society will sustain a myriad of conflicts at any one time, all at different stages and following their own dynamics.

Nevertheless, despite all the cautions and disclaimers with which I surround this diagram and its explanation, both here and elsewhere, in writing and in workshops, I have found that this diagram bears some recognisable relationship to the experiences of those working with conflict, and proves a useful tool for thinking about the stages and processes involved in conflict and its transformation.

Even when the conflict in question begins in a way other than that depicted by the diagram, that very difference becomes the ground for fruitful discussion as to how that conflict began.

The diagram, and indeed the text, have been modified in small ways as I have gone along (for instance by the inclusion of the words 'conflict/ violence prevention' in the last stage), in response to new insights and suggestions from participants and further thinking of my own. Its use and usefulness will be often alluded to in the workshop accounts recorded later.

My purpose in making and presenting this diagram has been to contribute to the understanding of conflict causes, and the possibilities for action to address them and move the conflict forward in a constructive way. I wanted to show that concern for justice and a desire for peace are not incompatible, though they may often be in tension, and that the maintenance of an oppressive status quo is a perpetuation of structural violence which may well lead to an explosion of physical violence, and is better addressed by constructive engagement in conflict. I saw and depicted oppressed groups themselves as the primary actors in this constructive engagement, and framed the subsequent conflict resolution phase primarily in terms of negotiation, rather than mediation, the latter being an optional aid to the former. Again, my purpose was to give emphasis to the role of the parties to the conflict, rather than to third parties.

Such is the strength of emphasis which has been given to third party roles in the CR field that workshop participants see CR and mediation as synonymous. Consequently, they try to judge their own role, actual and potential, according to criteria relevant for mediation but not for action by those who belong to one of the conflicting groups. This is confusing and counter-productive. I therefore thought it would be useful to discuss, on paper and in workshops, the range of roles which can be played at different stages of a conflict, and who can appropriately play them. What may be new in my thinking is the categorisation and inclusion of 'semi-partisan' roles - as against the usual simple distinction between partisan and non-partisan (or partial and impartial). I wanted to help those seeking to make a constructive contribution to see the variety of things that need to be done, and that those can vary, both according to the situation and according to their own place (and capacities) within it.

The following is a piece I wrote as a summary of this thinking, soon after I had made a presentation of it (together with the 'stages' diagram) in Warsaw (see Chapter Eight). I begin with a statement about my purpose, and values, indicating my attitude to theory. I also make explicit once again that the 'stages' diagram from which this discussion follows is not meant to describe 'the truth' about the way in which conflicts start, but rather to be *a* way of depicting *one* way in which they may begin.

## **'DIFFERENT ROLES IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION**

**My thinking about potential roles in relation to these stages and processes of conflict and its transformation is intended for those who wish to find a role on the side of just and sustainable relationships, to work nonviolently themselves and to help minimise the violence around them, respecting the basic human needs of all parties. There are, of course, other approaches. These are my aims and values.**

**Not all social conflicts begin with clear, one-sided oppression; most, if not all, however, will go through a pre-conflict phase in which both (or all) parties are increasingly aware of the underlying conflict, and beginning, with a greater or lesser degree of awareness and choice, to prepare for confrontation.**

**Most people who find themselves caught up in a conflict of an ethnic or political nature will not, in fact, have chosen to be involved or affected. Conscious decisions and actions are often taken by a relatively small number within a wider group. The passive majority do, however, have the option of becoming active and influencing events.**

**Those wishing to play a constructive role in relation to a given conflict will need to consider their own possibilities in relation to it: their existing involvement, if any; their standing in relation to different groups and individuals; their personal gifts and capacities; the degree of support they can enlist. The following is one possible formulation of the roles available to such would-be actors in the different phases of a conflict, grouping those phases under the headings Pre-conflict, Open Conflict, Conflict Resolution and Post-conflict. The roles I have enumerated will be categorised as 'partisan', 'semi-partisan' and 'non-partisan', and identified as being available to members of the conflicting groups on the one hand, or 'third parties' (those outside the conflicting groups) on the other.**

Since third-party roles tend to hold centre stage in discussion about constructive approaches to conflict, those who wish to play a part in the solving of conflicts within their own society - conflicts in which they are included, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, as member of one of the conflicting groups - tend to feel they should nonetheless be playing such a third-party role - or at least to assume the characteristic of impartiality so often attributed to third parties. To be a peacemaker, it is assumed, requires this. Since those involved in a conflict cannot play, by definition, be third parties, this assumption would logically exclude from constructive action in a conflict those most closely involved in and affected by it. It limits our understanding of the possibilities for peacemaking and overlooks some of its vital needs.

When the roles of third parties are under consideration, similarly, the assumption is commonly made that the third party, to be constructive, must be impartial; but this assumption seems to ignore questions of power and justice. To mediate, if one is in a position to do so, when a conflict is ripe for resolution, may be the most constructive option open to a third party; but what about a 'pre-conflict' phase where one group is being subjected to the violence of oppression. Is the only option then to be impartial? Or if, during open conflict, an oppressed group is being overwhelmed by its powerful adversary, is it still imperative to avoid taking sides? Can it not be the most constructive thing to support the weaker party, take a 'partisan' position, in the name of justice? Peace and oppression are incompatible.

Those who wish, in my words, 'to find a role on the side of just and sustainable relationships .....respecting the basic human needs of all parties', will always, in one sense, wish to avoid taking sides - to be 'non-partisan'. Their intention at all times will be to uphold the dignity and human rights of all concerned in the conflict. They will wish to avoid taking sides against any group, in the sense of denying or undermining their dignity and rights. They could, however, wish to take sides against something they were doing, or against policies or structures which favoured them at another group's expense. And they could take the side of, or speak for, one group, in terms of its dignity and needs: become an advocate or actor on its behalf, whether as an outsider, a 'third party', or as a member of one of the groups which is party to the conflict. Negotiations, for example, need negotiators, and the qualities and attitude they bring to the process will be of great importance.

Those who belong to one of the conflicting groups will find it hard, if not impossible, ever to be regarded by the other side as non-partisan, impartial or neutral. They will also find it hard, if not impossible, to be so. Our belongings are fundamental to us, whether we accept or reject them, and colour the lenses through which we look at the world. Those who, from one side of a conflict, wish to build bridges of communication and understanding between their side and the other, will find ways of adjusting their own glasses and of establishing trust with the other. I describe such people, therefore, as 'semi-partisan' (though maybe a better expression could be found). If like-minded people from different sides join together, they may even establish quasi-neutral or non-partisan credentials. Personal goodwill and integrity may go a long way; but clear thinking is also needed, about what is being attempted - its appropriateness to the situation and to the capacities of the players.

Here, then, is a list of roles available in these different categories, to outsiders or 'third parties', and to insiders or members of the conflicting groups. The list is long, but certainly not exhaustive. I have made it because I wish to get away from single models of 'conflict resolution'; to demonstrate in some way that there are many different ways of acting constructively in relation to conflict; that the role of mediator is one among many; that those directly involved in or affected by the conflict have other options open to them and are, or should be, the most important players, and that the agenda for peacemakers of all kinds will change according to the stage that the conflict has reached.

**IN THE PRE-CONFLICT PHASE** (corresponding to the oppression --> conscientisation -> group formation phases on the diagram; applicable also, however, to the latent or incipient phase of a conflict not characterised by extreme power imbalance):

The partisan roles which may be undertaken by members of groups between which there is hidden or underlying conflict include:

educator of own group (conscientisation)

activist\*\*

advocate for own group with other power-holders (including the 'general public) and with the opposing side



**establishing/developing contact and co-operation with potential supporters**

**Semi-partisan roles for members of (pre)conflicting groups (being as open and unbiased as possible):**

**bridge builder\* - establishing/developing contact and understanding with appropriate members of the opposing side**

**public educator**

**Partisan roles for third parties:**

**agent of conscientisation; resource person (for money, information)**

**activist\*\* in solidarity**

**advocate with opposing groups and potential supporters**

**builder of solidarity**

**(\*\* 'activist' here = someone who takes part/participates in action which has a direct impact on the situation, especially on power relations. 'nonviolent direct action' is a field of its own with its own literature.**

**\* 'bridge-builder' here = someone who is instrumental in bringing individuals or groups together across inter-communal or factional divides, in order to reduce hostility and establish understanding.**

**All these roles will be most powerfully undertaken within the framework of groups organised for action, and as a function of group strategy. Group-building and group-maintenance roles apply, therefore, to all concerned.)**

### **Non-partisan roles for third parties:**

**bridge builder - helping establish contact/understanding between the (pre)conflicting sides**

**public educator**

**human rights monitor (often in practice semi-partisan)**

**Note: in situations of clear, one-sided injustice - oppression -third parties are likely to opt for partisan roles. If, however, they have particular non-partisan expertise (or other qualifications) to offer, they may consider this still their best contribution, even at this stage; or they may choose to avoid clear partisan roles in order to keep themselves available - acceptable to both sides - for a non-partisan role at a later stage. Would-be mediators who have once been advocates of one side will find it hard to be trusted by all parties as impartial.**

### **IN THE OPEN CONFLICT PHASE:**

**The role options outlined above for the pre-conflict phase will still apply, though the relative importance of the different roles may change, with 'activist' and 'solidarity' roles predominating. However, when power relations change in favour of the oppressed group, or as people weary of the struggle (especially if it has involved violence), some of those who have so far been partisan may shift to semi-partisan roles, putting their efforts into bridge-building or beginning to prepare the ground for talks with the other side, or to create a constituency in support of an end to hostilities.**

### **IN THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION PHASE:**

#### **Partisan roles for members of conflicting parties:**

**advocate**

**engager in pre-negotiation dialogue**

**negotiator**

**participants in reconciliation process**

**Semi-partisan roles for members of conflicting parties:**

**bridge-builder for dialogue;**

**advocate of resolution**

**solidarity builder/activist for resolution**

**supporter/participant in process of co-operative problem-solving and reconciliation**

**Non-partisan roles for third parties:**

**advocate of resolution**

**solidarity-builder/activist for resolution**

**bridge builder**

**mediator**

**monitor**

**facilitator in process of reconciliation**

**IN THE POST-CONFLICT PHASE (long-term co-operation --> peace maintenance):**

**In the first post-conflict phase, partisan roles will, ideally, become relatively unimportant, with the semi-partisan and non-partisan roles of monitoring and bridge-**

building continuing. In addition, post-traumatic therapies may be needed, and the practical work of social and physical reconstruction will have an important part to play at both the practical and the psychological level.

For the final phase of 'peace maintenance', however, since conflict is a part of life, and its constructive handling a key attribute for a healthy society, all the above roles will apply, but again their relative importance will shift, with co-operative rather than confronting functions coming to the fore in inter-group relations. In intra-group relations it may well be the reverse. As mentioned above, different social groupings will have their own factions, power struggles and conflicts, which also need constructive handling. The ways in which such 'peacetime' conflicts are handled can set a pattern for approaches to the larger conflicts which threaten the well-being of so many: approaches which, once established, could help shift social practices and norms; so help prevent the violence and suffering by which such conflicts are so often accompanied.'

(A note on terminology: The former Secretary General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros Ghali, in his 'Agenda for Peace', (1992), proposes three forms of UN intervention: 'peace making', 'peace keeping' and 'peace building'. The first two forms are military. When I use the term 'peacemaking' I mean not military intervention but any contribution to the achievement of just and peaceful relationships. 'Peace building', however, describes the range of nonmilitary activities which can contribute to sustainable peace, referring particularly to the post- (and pre-) violence phase of 'conflict prevention'.)

This text, then, exemplifies the way in which I have tried to open up discussion on the different roles open to those inside and outside a conflict, and the way the choice of role may change according to the stage that conflict has reached. But how do I understand theory? David Bloomfield's comments on theoretical models seem so apposite that I will quote from them at some length (Bloomfield 1995: 161). Arguing for 'greater theory/ practice integration' and the adjustment of generalised theoretical models when applied to specific contexts, he asserts that such a model

'can only gain any real prescriptive validity if it is tested against practice at each stage of its development, and altered or rejected depending on the results of that testing. The model produced in this gradual fashion will only prove valid to the extent that it fulfils the descriptive requirements of (1) drawing its form inductively from empirical reality; (2)

reflecting accurately the real-world situations to which it relates; and (3) remaining flexible enough to respond to the empirical evidence. Only then can it fulfil the fourth - prescriptive - requirement that it actually prove useful for addressing real conflict(s).'

Rouhana (whom I have quoted so extensively since his remarks seem so challenging for all CR theory and practice, although he is writing about interventions in international conflict) quotes McDonald and Diamond as distinguishing between practitioners who 'work from a particular conceptual model' and those who 'work more freewheeling, doing what feels right in the situation and trusting their experience and intuition.' (Rouhana 1995: 260) This seems to me an example of the 'either-or' theorising so characteristic and unhelpful in the CR field. I cannot imagine that many practitioners fall entirely into either category, though they may lean one way or the other. For myself, I hope to combine well grounded and developed thinking - what could be described as provisional theory - with continuing, moment by moment responsiveness on the basis of the kind of internalised and integrated knowledge which is described as intuition.

As the text on roles and stages in conflict suggests, my understanding of theory is that it is a device for exploring and clarifying things. I do not have to agree with a theory in order to have my thinking illuminated by it, and theories can only represent one way of thinking about what is: they cannot *be* it. Theory is not 'the truth about' things. It is part of the process of making meaning. Since I want my theorising to be directly useful to the people with whom I work as a trainer, it needs to be expressed in concise ways, visually as well as verbally, helping them to articulate their own reality and so to have an increased capacity for identifying relevant forms and possibilities for constructive action. I also want it to be directly useful to me, in sharpening my understanding of the range of tools and skills people will need from training in a given context. For that I need constantly to review its implications for the content of the courses I design. And I want it to be useful to 'the field', constituting some kind of response to well-founded fears of the 'pacifying' tendencies of conflict resolution. One of the frameworks through which theory emerges and is conveyed to others is the framework of culture: its values and assumptions. The two fields of thought I have been trying to amalgamate in a sense already represent two quite different world views. In my work I am confronted by - and confront - some ways of seeing things which are grounded in cultures very different from my own.

## THEORY AND TRAINING: CULTURAL ISSUES.

### Differing world views

Thus far I have been explaining and reflecting on the theoretical base and contribution of my work. Since the focus of my research is not Conflict Resolution but Conflict Resolution training, I shall devote the final section of this chapter to a consideration of the challenges of the application of this theory and its assumptions in cross-cultural training.

Recently I was asked to review the draft founding document of a new CR organisation, and noted their emphasis on its secular nature. My comment was that whereas this could have the effect of making the organisation seem safe and ideologically neutral to potential users, it could also indicate a lack of sympathy or understanding for the world views, meanings and feelings of the overwhelming proportion of the world's population. Between one culture and another there is room for much disagreement and misunderstanding about the meaning of words and actions.

The notion of facilitation appears to offer part, at least, of a solution to this dilemma, if facilitation is understood to involve the art and practice of making space for the articulation of the points of view and experiences of all present in a given process. I see respect as a key value for such facilitation, and a concept which can provide a bridge between secular and religious worlds. It requires of a facilitator a recognition of other world views, and openness to them, and acknowledgement that the approaches offered are culturally laden.

ANV grows from more varied cultural perspectives than CR, having been born in Asia and developed on all continents, with a major contribution from Latin America. CR derives largely from one culture or counter-culture, and is based on the individualism of the North and West rather than the communitarianism of the South and East. It supports the notion that conflicts are better opened up, rather than kept beneath the surface with the idea that if they are kept hidden they will not damage the social fabric. CR relies on the idea that issues can be broken down and analysed, and that they can be kept separate from relationships ('separate the person from the problem'), whereas in some other cultures a conflict must be seen as whole, with relationships themselves the most

important issue. CR assumes that mediators should be outsiders, with a purely facilitative function, whereas in many cultures they would be weighty insiders, with an advisory as well as a brokering role, and in yet others a conflict would be dealt with by a whole community seeking consensus. In other words, the entire approach of CR is likely to be alienating in some cultures.

I also understand, from my own experience and from conversation with others, that in the Arab world and in Africa there is understandable suspicion and scepticism about an approach (CR) which emanates from the West and appears to emphasise the 'resolution' or settlement of conflict, as against opening, ignoring the importance of struggle for justice. CR's apparent eagerness for ending conflict is seen as a desire for pacification, a valuing of peace at the expense of justice. Similarly, CR's relativism, its assertion that conflicts can be analysed dispassionately, and that competing claims and arguments are not necessarily either right or wrong, can be seen as moral abdication in more traditional cultures with strong moral frameworks. It would seem likely that the discourse of ANV could be more acceptable in such cultures, with its emphasis on engagement in conflict for the sake of justice, and its strongly moral tone and religious roots. But the moral outlawing of violence is in itself liable to seem suspect when advocated by those from the West, since Western domination was achieved and is maintained through violence.

The Alternative Dispute Resolution movement (within the wider CR field), working within multi-cultural societies in North America, is making considerable efforts to address the question of cultural suspicion and appropriateness. Duryea outlines some of the major cultural differences which the ADR movement needs to take into account. She suggests (Duryea 1992: 39) that Hall's notion of high context and low context cultures is a helpful epistemological tool.

'Low context cultures generally refer to groups characterized by individualism, overt communication and heterogeneity. The United States, Canada and central and northern Europe are described as areas where low context cultural practices are most in evidence. High context cultures feature collective identity-focus, covert communication and homogeneity. This approach prevails in Asian countries including Japan, China and Korea as well as Latin American countries.'

Whereas I have not found in my work that there is any manifest conflict between collectivist and individualist points of view (perhaps because social or collective action is the focus of the

workshops) the 'covert' as against open communication pattern has at times been a topic of discussion and of significance for the workshop process itself, where there have been Indian, Japanese and Korean participants. The very idea that individuals involved in conflict should speak openly of their feelings and needs sits uneasily with the value placed by most Asians on personal reticence and communal harmony. I imagine that in inter-group relations this reticence may not apply, but in intra-group and inter-personal relations in a multi-cultural group, it could present problems. For the facilitator, it may mean that feedback cannot be taken at face value, in that dissatisfaction or discomfort may be covered by politeness. What is seen in the West as helpful frankness may be seen in the East as shocking rudeness.

According to Barnes, a distinction can also be made between 'specific role cultures' on the one hand and 'diffuse role cultures' on the other (Duryea 1992: 44).

'In specific role cultures, we care only that the person we encounter fulfil our expectations. We do not care about the individual's religion, politics or aesthetic tastes. Only in intimate relationships do we concern ourselves with these questions.' In diffuse role cultures, such matters, it is claimed, are always important. Hence, presumably, some of the difficulty with 'separating the people from the problem'.

Polite behaviour may seem to suggest that this feat has been achieved, but may in fact denote only a desire not to behave improperly or to lose face through open conflict.

Those from a 'diffuse role culture' may feel uneasy with the notion that the ideal mediator not only has no prior relationship to those in dispute, but exerts no influence over their choice of solution, being a process facilitator, not a solution adviser. In many cultures in, for instance, the Far East and Middle East, the mediator is a skilled and respected person, often holding social status on account of age and position, whose advice is looked for and whose task it is to advise and persuade. This does not, to me, suggest a lack of self-respect on the part of disputants, nor the abandonment of all autonomy, but a choice to draw on another's wisdom, rather than relying on one's own. At issue is the relative importance attached to autonomy on the one hand and interdependence on the other, and the role of status in social relations - which seems to be a matter for mutually enriching inter-cultural debate. The ideal of eventual willing ownership of the agreed solution to a conflict can still



be met in authority-based forms of mediation, given that the parties to the conflict willingly accept the process. The egalitarian character of ADR, however, is absent.

Mohammed Abu-Nimer, in a paper entitled 'Conflict Resolution Training in the Middle East: Lessons to be Learned', (no date) describes (p. 25) one Middle East training in which participants 'challenged the team with the rhetorical question: do you intend to change the core values of the Arab Society?' Affirming (p. 12) the importance of introducing 'new skills and knowledge and reinforcing constructive old or existing cultural habits', Abu-Nimer continues: 'Stronger emphasis is needed, however, on the transformation of old negative and destructive attitudes toward conflict.' This seems to suggest that simply to offer something new is not an adequate way of dealing with negative aspects of existing culture. If this is so - which it may well be - I feel the limitations that an outsider will have. Not every aspect of a culture will support the well-being of all the members of the society it shapes. Some members of that society may challenge its values and behaviour patterns very strongly - as Ghaffar Khan (referred to above) did with the Pathans, and as I have done at times, at home in England. But I certainly do not consider myself in a position to challenge, directly, the cultural norms of those with whom I work when I do not belong to their culture. What I do, however, is to try and create opportunities for workshop participants to evaluate relevant aspect of their own culture. This is a recurrent topic in coming chapters.

### **Dangers of cultural generalisations**

I have no doubt that cultural differences exist and can be described in a variety of ways. I am aware also that my own perceptions are culturally influenced, if not determined. I am convinced of the importance of this awareness. I am particularly aware of the dangers of Western cultural arrogance, and the sensitivities of 'the rest of the world' related to Western history and current political and economic power. Cultural generalisations however, while they may be useful, may oversimplify, both in geographical terms and in relation to specific groups - which are, in the end, composed of varied individuals (my Western construction!). For instance, personal reticence is a relative matter. English people are probably, on average, far more reserved than their North American counterparts, though the two cultures have much in common. Teutonic and Latin styles in Europe differ considerably. And within whatever cultural grouping that is chosen there will in any case be

all kinds of variations and contradictions. Although an awareness of cultural differences may be helpful in some ways, to generalise too broadly or to assume that all members of a given group will attach the same value to generalised cultural norms will prove counter-productive in terms of sensitivity.

Cultural generalisations can obscure important differences in power, values and interests between subgroups, as well as individuals, within a given group. Because of the nature of my work, I have thought of cultural difference largely in geographic and ethnic terms; but I could as well have chosen a class (or caste) focus. Whatever the chosen set of references, to frame things too readily in broad cultural terms can amount to prejudice and stereotyping: a denial of individual values, feelings and needs. In their introduction to 'Refusing Holy Orders: Women and Fundamentalism in Britain' (Sahgal and Yuval-Davis, 1992), the editors argue that multi-culturalism imposes a religious identity on those who do not wish it, encourages religious fundamentalism, and bestows authority on male religious leaders at the expense of women within ethnic minorities. The promotion of gender equality and egalitarianism in general, and participatory processes for decision-making, are anathema - at least to the male and the powerful - in many cultures. (Here, however, I should perhaps note the maleness of the academic world of CR and of the preponderance of male CR practitioners at the political as against the social level; and I have noted with sadness and irritation that Chris Mitchell (for instance 1991: 223), who has written so much and so helpfully, nonetheless excludes women by his language.)

Taslina Nasrin, writing in *The New Internationalist* (London, 1997), tells of her experience of being a 'disobedient woman' in Bangladesh, and concludes that the moral standards of any society are fluid and relate to its economic situation, political structure, religious influences and system of education. She calls for the exercise of social critique, arguing for individual moral responsibility.

Nasrin's argument for personal moral responsibility and the supremacy of individual moral understanding and conscience comes close, it seems, to the Western valuing of 'autonomy'. Duryea (1992: 18) notes that

Respect is mentioned by many writers as a key element that transcends culture. Ishimaya (1989) writes of a "transcultural individual identity" as suggested by Jung, Maslow, Erickson and others. He suggests that 'transcultural and transpersonal identities can

promote a deeper and broader appreciation of self and life, and facilitate healthier individuation and relatedness with the world, compared to a culture-bound, unidimensional self-identity." He suggests that those working with diverse populations would profit from looking beneath cultural differences to common anthropological roots, existential developmental themes and aspirations for self-actualisation.'

This thinking seems to connect with 'basic human needs' theory as developed by Burton and others (though Max-Neef, cited above, points to the different ways in which these needs may be satisfied in different cultures). Furthermore, Duryea cites Fisher and Long and their study findings which suggest that matching mediator and client ethnicity in ADR is not as important as other things, particularly gender and general life experience. It seems to me therefore that in my training, if I wish to work respectfully, I need to combine attention and sensitivity to cultural assumptions (especially my own) with attention to the being and contributions of individual participants.

### **Elicitive training: advantages and dilemmas**

A precondition for respectfulness in the practice of training will be not only the personal attention of the trainer but, underlying that attention, a respectful approach to teaching and learning: one which respects the existing knowledge of participants, both tacit and explicit. Not a great deal has been written on CR training as such. For that reason, perhaps, and because of its own liveliness, clarity and wealth of examples, John Paul Lederach's 'Preparing for Peace' (1995) is much discussed by practitioners in the CR field. I shall therefore use it as a vehicle for my discussion of elicitive training.

Lederach's main theme is the importance of using an elicitive approach in cross-cultural training, although he acknowledges that, quite properly, most practitioners use a combination of elicitive and prescriptive or didactic methods. Culture can be seen as a resource, not an obstacle, if training is understood as a largely elicitive process. Given such an approach, 'Culture,.... natural and taken-for-granted knowledge in a given setting, is.....the foundation and seedbed of model development and creation (p. 62). This, he argues, takes us beyond a concern for cultural sensitivity to a recognition that the solutions to conflict taking place within a given culture must come from the

resources of that culture. This is a much more radical approach, and one which, in theory at least, I want to adopt.

However, I think Lederach exaggerates the extent to which an elicitive style of training gets round the problem of cultural assumptions on the part of the trainer. Even elicitive questions are based on assumptions. For instance, a key elicitive question for Lederach is, 'So to whom do you turn?' (ie for help in a conflict). That may be a pretty open question, but it reflects his key assumption about the importance of third party roles in conflict, coupled with the notion that third party help would be sought voluntarily. It becomes clear that Lederach's purpose is to pursue his own interest in third party roles in general and mediation in particular, using elicitive process to build mediation models. His 'third party' emphasis may not run counter to practice in other cultures, but the choice of it reflects the predominant approach of 'conflict resolution experts' in the West. I am sure I work in similar ways, using my own beliefs and interests as my starting point. To deconstruct Lederach's examples is to provide myself with a salutary warning against placing too much faith (as I tend to) in the power of an elicitive style to somehow leapfrog over all cultural divides. It reminds me that my own approach is not (and is not meant to be) value free.

Ronald J. Fisher, in a discussion of 'Training as a Form of Interactive Conflict Resolution' (1995), reflects on the cultural dimension of such interventions. Noting as Lederach does that workshops, even when elicitively inclined, will include some 'prescriptive' input, he suggests (p. 13), that

'trainers may propose concepts, models, strategies and skills that may be relevant to the participants' experience and appropriate to understanding and dealing with the conflict which they face. It is for the participants to assess this input, and to reject it or to blend it with their culturally appropriate ways of managing conflict.... The onus is initially on trainers to provide the structures and procedures that will allow for a full and meaningful interaction between themselves and the participants, so that the latter can take away from the learning experience what is valuable and culturally congruent for them.'

One question which Lederach does not discuss to my satisfaction is how to respond to views, behaviours and suggestions reflecting social norms which offend his own values. Maybe he is able to set his own feelings aside in a way that I am not, but the personal feelings of a facilitator are not all that is at stake. If existing cultural norms were so helpful, the world would be a kinder, safer

place than it is. The outlook which Lederach himself articulates in his introduction runs counter to mainstream culture in his own country, and very likely counter to other mainstream cultures, challenging the customary patterns of people's day to day experience. He argues that participants are the best people to evaluate their own ideas for how to go about things; which in principle seems fair enough. It certainly coincides with my own policy of making space for participants to do their own cultural evaluation. But I do not find that this approach removes all dilemmas. I wonder, for instance, if something is said which Lederach finds shocking, but no-one else challenges, will he himself challenge it, and if so, how? Does he let his own views and feelings show? Is this a point at which he moves one way or the other along his prescriptive-elicitive spectrum line?

These can be dilemmas for me as a facilitator, both at home and abroad. Is it appropriate for me to challenge what in my terms are racism, sexism or authoritarianism when I encounter them in training? Should there be bounds to my openness? I feel a conflict between my wish to respect the norms and values of others and my need to be faithful to my own: a conflict which will constitute a recurrent theme in coming chapters.

Elicitive training carries with it another dilemma. Although using an elicitive style in training is respectful in making way for and honouring the understandings and experiences of participants, it is also, in most circumstances, counter-cultural in itself. Workshops of this kind come as a culture shock to participants from almost anywhere, if they are encountering them for the first time. They create, in themselves, a temporary and intensely experienced culture in which participants speak and act in ways they would, perhaps, never do in the outside world. For instance, the degree of frankness which allows for mutual and public self-critique is likely to be counter-cultural in itself, which does not render the process impossible, but can make it a very sensitive matter. For those who understand learning as being delivered by experts in the form of lectures, to be invited to work in small groups, play games, participate in role-plays, can be seen as something of an insult - as not being taken seriously as students.

The informality and intimacy of such workshops can be quite challenging and uncomfortable for some, though participants can to some extent choose their level of engagement. The fact that workshops create their own temporary culture is part of their power, because of the intensity of experience and learning which it makes possible. It is also a potential weakness, since there is a

danger that the behaviours and ideas explored and practised there may not be easily transferable. There may be elements of the workshop culture, and the counter-cultural ideas which it has generated, which participants wish to incorporate into their lives outside; but the difficulties should not be underestimated. Overall, I believe that to use a largely elicitive approach to training, while it may be unfamiliar to participants, can go a long way to overcome the worst pitfalls of cross-cultural training and maximise the usefulness of a workshop. It will not, however, eliminate the very considerable challenges inherent in such an endeavour, and the skills modelled and practised in the workshop process will have to be carefully adapted for use in the world beyond. These challenges will be described and discussed in the workshop accounts which follow, and will be the subject of further reflection in my closing chapters.

### **Training as intervention**

My final topic in this section, with which I shall end this chapter, is the respectfulness (or otherwise) of training as an intervention from outside: that is, from outside the conflict and, for the purposes of this thesis, outside the culture.

The first criterion for any respectful training intervention would be that it was wanted rather than imposed. Participation in the kind of workshops I facilitate is certainly voluntary (with the single exception of workshops included in a Peace Studies MA course!). However, if the decision by local partners to organise the workshop, and by participants to participate, is to be an informed one, its nature and purposes will need to be clear. Duryea (1992) quotes both Gosling and Chesler as describing the primary role of outside intervention as helping the parties to a conflict to look at the issues and power relations within that conflict, and consider their options for action - of which entering into a mediation process will be only one. Training is a form of intervention which can provide a framework for just such a process for understanding conflict and how it may be approached.

If, however, as is so often the case, CR training is focused mainly on third party roles, with a major emphasis on mediation, the broader process of understanding conflict is restricted, and issues of power and empowerment for constructive self-advocacy are neglected. In other words, what I see

as the theoretical short-comings of CR are played out in the training which is offered, which in my view often renders it inadequate. Abu-Nimer (1997: 31) challenges the field of CR with the 'core dilemma' which faces it: can it meet the needs of 'deprived groups who lack the basic needs' rather than serving the interests of those who benefit from the status quo? To be of real service, trainers need to help participants in the first place to identify the nature of their situation, the stage of their conflict; then to offer a corresponding menu of options for the workshop agenda, with as wide as possible a range of options, skills and tools. This is why CR training, like its theory, needs, in my view, to be expanded to include the resources of the ANV tradition.

Even if the style and content of a workshop make it as fit as possible for use according to its advertised purposes, it is possible for it to be 'sold' in advance in such a way that it deludes potential organisers and participants about the extent of its transformative possibilities. Rouhana (1995: 258) is deeply critical of CR's vague pretensions:

'For the most part, practitioners of unofficial intervention in international conflict do not describe what they intend to achieve or how they want to get there. Implicitly, since these individuals claim to practice 'conflict resolution', their inherent goal must be the resolution of conflict. But is the goal of the effort really the *resolution* of a given conflict or is it some limited *contribution* ..... to the resolution of the conflict?'

This apposite question and the answer it implies are as relevant to training as to any other form of CR intervention.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have discussed my understanding of respect; I have outlined the understanding of ANV which I brought to the field of CR; I have set out what I consider to be key elements of CR theory, showing how I think they can usefully be supplemented by insights and approaches from ANV; and I have outlined some of the challenges and dilemmas of cross-cultural training interventions in this field. These three elements - respect as a concept and value, respect embodied in theory useful to those involved in conflict, and respect in cross-cultural training (focusing on my respect as a facilitator) will constitute three different strands of thought and exploration in my

thesis, as I test my understanding of respect in different cultural contexts, monitor responses to my facilitation and workshop input, and notice my own actions and reactions. The fourth strand of my research will be the inquiry process itself, and my own journey as inquirer. In my next chapter I will explain the research approach I brought to my inquiry.



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH PURPOSES AND APPROACH; METHODOLOGY AND VALIDITY

In this chapter I will describe the nature of my work, and my purpose and focus in researching it in action. I will then explain my understanding of knowledge, moving on to a discussion of educational and research approaches relevant to my work as a facilitator/trainer, and paralleled in it. Having outlined the nature of my research and placed it within the Action Research family, I will describe the set of methods which I have used to carry it out, discussing their limitations and possibilities. In the last section I will explore the question of validity, closing with some more general concerns and hopes.

#### THE NATURE OF MY WORK AND MY RESEARCH PURPOSE

In my work as a facilitator of cross-cultural training workshops in nonviolent approaches to conflict, my purpose is to help participants to develop their capacity for constructive action. The workshops (whose content and nature will be more fully indicated in Chapter Four) have been held in a wide variety of places and have brought together participants from many areas of conflict. Often, the group was in itself multi-cultural, even where participants came from one geographical region; usually the facilitators were from a cultural background (or backgrounds) different from those of some or all participants. The particular focus of my research is respect. Although I thought a great deal, when I began my research, about the concept of respect as I understood it (as outlined in the previous chapter), it has been essential to the purpose of my inquiry that I should be open to the meanings with which others invest the word, and to observe the ways in which its meanings and implications for me seem to be echoed and contradicted in other cultures. The breadth of my research focus, using a word and concept of such indefinable - endlessly definable - meaning, applying it to both the process and content of my work, has seemed, at times, questionable, and has indeed been questioned. Nonetheless, for me the intricacies of the word's meaning and application are a matter of fascination and challenge: not to be denied. The aims and values of my work, and their implications, the relationships and events to which they respond, are not simple. The complexities and contradictions cannot be reduced: only recognised and managed; at times enjoyed, often struggled with.

At times I have felt dissatisfied with the word: felt it inadequate for my meaning. It can sound cold, detached, almost legalistic, lacking the warmth and outreaching energy of 'goodwill' or 'care' (though that depends on its use and context). Its strength lies in its provision of a kind of bottom line: a minimum basis for constructive human interaction. Its endless openness to interpretation in application has presented me with great difficulty; but it is also a strength because it will not allow me to become fixed in my opinions or to delude myself that I have arrived at 'the truth'. I shall discuss this further in my concluding chapters.

As I noted in the previous chapter, my research has four threads: the meaning and usefulness across cultures of the concept of respect; the respectfulness (honesty and utility) of my theory; the respectfulness of my facilitation, and the inquiry process itself. So my research questions have been about the style, quality and usefulness of my work as a facilitator, and the universality of the values on which it is based; whether it is useful to work across cultures, and if so on what common understandings; how the relationship between trainer and participants can be respectful at all, when the trainer is of a different culture from participants - particularly when the trainer's culture is, in world terms, the dominant one. Trainer style (in my case quite largely elicitive) is clearly a key consideration here. My writing will contain reflections on the effects, in my training workshops, of my own personality and of my national and racial identity and gender - both on my own behaviour and feelings in the trainer role, on the way I understand that role, and on the ways others may perceive me.

I have aimed to make respect the core characteristic of my way of being as a facilitator, expressing itself both in the way in which I conduct myself in relation to participants and co-facilitators, and in the way I structure workshops and choose processes. (This seems, as I reflect now, an extremely ambitious, if not overweening, project; and also altogether appropriate and necessary.) At the same time I have tried to observe and record participants' responses to the concept of respect (and related questions), and their own understanding of it.

I have been engaged in a constant process of developing and adapting my theory about conflict transformation, in the light of its apparent relevance to - and conformity with - participants' understandings and experiences. I wish my theory to be rooted in experience and to be formulated

for practical application. At the same time I see it as provisional and changing, rather than as finished, and having the status of 'heuristic device' rather than of 'truth'. This is in line with my general theory of knowledge, as subjective and provisional, as I will go on to explain.

#### MY POINT OF VIEW AS RESEARCHER: ONTOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY.

In this section I shall explain my understanding of knowledge and its sources, and of what there is to be known. What I write will be a kind of 'credo' - first person: some of the things I believe. These things are not intended to be objective in any way or to represent 'Truth'. They are formed by my upbringing and personality; by reading, conversation, exposure (conscious and unconscious) to ideas mediated in many ways, and by my own thinking and shaping. A few written sources will be cited as such.

While I embrace post-modern scepticism about 'objective' knowledge and 'reality', and while I acknowledge the subjectivity of all human knowing, I would not wish to deny that there is being to be known - and indeed not known - through human existence, experience and reflection. I support Reason and Heron's thesis that 'the mind makes its world by meeting the given' (Reason and Heron October 1996: 5). While the meanings that we make, both individually and socially, are a response to the wider being of life as we participate in it, at the same time the meanings we construct shape our experience and understanding of that participation. We are not fixed and separate selves, acting and accumulating knowledge, as a discrete commodity, in a vacuum. We exist, think and act in relationship: relationship both to other human beings and to beings, and being, generally. This being-in-relationship has been described as 'intersubjectivity' (Crossley, 1996: 14): self-definition and actualisation through recognition of and interaction with the other. It embraces Buber's notion of the 'I-Thou' relationship, which in Crossley's words 'depends upon participation in a common intersubjective space, a between'. The consciousness or knowledge generated by this engagement with the other is described by Reason and Heron (1996) as subjective-objective or participatory - created by the interaction between the subject and the wider 'given'.

I believe in the possibility, at least, of another more basic or fundamental form of knowing: knowing that is in itself 'given': knowing-by-being. (See Shotter, 1993.) Here I prefer the word

'understanding' to 'knowledge', since the former suggests embodiment: a personal or social standpoint, and, at the same time, contact with the ground, the earth which supports us and of which we are part: the wider being which we must know in our bones because it is in our bones. Skolimowski (1992) would describe this as 'participatory knowing'. As Charlene Spretnak puts it, we are 'self-reflexive manifestations of the universe' and capable of 'differentiation, subjectivity and communion' (Spretnak, 1993: 32). I include within this putative knowing-by-being the moral knowledge (con-science or 'knowing with') which is able to respond to what Reason and Heron describe as the 'axiological question' of 'what is intrinsically valuable in human life'. It seems likely that, if there is such a thing as instinct (as it would appear from other forms of animal life that there is), we are born with instinctive impulses which could be described as moral, since morality (as I understand it) is about what makes relationships work constructively for the common good.

This is not, however, to deny that moral awareness is shaped by culture and context, nor that we are faced by endless moral dilemmas within the codes we construct. Our moral sense is simply that: ours - both singular and plural, personal and collective. From a Western perspective the individual is the custodian of her/ his own conscience; and as a Westerner I hold that position strongly. I recognise that to someone from a collectivist rather than an individualist culture, the Western emphasis on individual conscience, responsibility and rights may seem a distortion; but I feel that, while there may inevitably be differences of emphasis, the dichotomy between individualism and collectivism is in some ways a false one. The conscience of the individual is developed socially, within a cultural (and possibly sub- or counter-cultural) context. Whatever points of view we hold, we are likely to have a sense of community with like-minded others, and to define ourselves also in relation to those from whom we differ.

Like the rest of our knowing, our moral knowing - our conscience, values and motivation - exists as a function of, and in relation to, the wider 'given'; but it is at the same time and by the same token unable to comprehend or encompass (as against understand) the given. Our moral knowledge, like the rest, must remain subjective - partial - and provisional. Looking at the damage and deprivation we, as a species, inflict on each other and our environment, it is easy to question the idea of moral knowing, innate or otherwise; but I nonetheless believe it is present in us and that to deny its being or ignore its promptings is to deny hope and appreciation, and any sense or possibility of fulfilment.

Paulo Freire, writing about education as a dialogical process, rather than a means of filling people's heads with received truths, was unequivocal about the need for 'the objective transformation of reality'. While he did not wish, he insisted, 'to dismiss the role of subjectivity in the struggle to change structures', he did want to 'combat subjectivist immobility'. In his words, he was propounding

'neither objectivism nor subjectivism, nor yet psychologism ....., but rather subjectivity and objectivity in constant dialectical relationship' (Freire, 1972: 27).

My daughter, Becky Francis, in her PhD thesis, explores the apparent contradiction of wishing to marry a clear feminist stance and aims with post-modern research perspectives and aims. She argues that while theoretically embracing constructionism we may nonetheless experience ourselves as having 'agency, moral obligation, and preferences for different kinds of discourse' (Francis 1996: 30); that we need narratives in which to situate our lives, and that there is a distinction to be made between authoritarian and libertarian truth discourses. I certainly would want to make such distinctions and to choose and develop my own narrative accordingly.

N.J.Rengger (1995: 182), rejecting the 'arid rationalizations of many unreflective moderns' and 'the triumphalist and .... false 'relativism' of some (perhaps equally unreflective) postmoderns', insists that recognising the 'fragmentary, often (at least) aporetic character of human ethical choices and the lack of universal purchase of instrumental rationality ' does not mean

'that we cannot make judgements about the right and the good. We can and we must. Of course, such judgements are never final. Given this, we have to have political arrangements for acknowledging and dealing with errors and mistakes'.

I imagine we have to have academic and personal arrangements for such purposes, too; but to hold moral purposes humbly, as this suggests, seems vital for me in my work as a facilitator and as a researcher. The very nature of my work presupposes espoused values and moral choices; but it also requires openness to other viewpoints and a desire to learn from them.

Although I consider all that I think and do, including my purposes, to be open to challenge, it is hard to imagine that any effort or work could be undertaken without purpose, or that purposes

could be value-free, or indeed free of a moral - or counter-moral - frame. My personal inquiry takes place within a moral frame and a value-based life-purpose: a desire to be part of a movement for change - personal, cultural and structural; change to reduce human cruelty and suffering and increase the possibilities of human fulfilment. My purpose in facilitating educational processes, a purpose held both passionately and tentatively, is to contribute to the search for just, constructive relationships. My research purpose is to increase my understanding of that work, and myself in it, so that I am able to do it more choicefully, with greater confidence, and as helpfully as I can. 'Action', wrote Freire, 'will constitute an authentic praxis only if its consequences become the object of critical reflection' (Freire 1972: 41). 'Critical reflection' is what I have tried to engage in myself, at the same time as creating processes for it in my work with others.

The value of respect at the centre of my research is based on the notion of individual-in-community-in-context (or communities of individuals in context); on the exercise of moral responsibility in human relationships. It involves the recognition and honouring of the being of others, both as - and for - being distinct, separate and individual, and as - and for - being part of the rest of being, their place in the scheme of things, participation in the web of interdependence. By this understanding I hope to avoid, as far as possible, the choice between an individualist and a collectivist approach to values and morality.

## **ACTION RESEARCH AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO MY WORK AS A FACILITATOR**

### **General correspondence between the two**

In this section I want to discuss different forms of action research and the ways they relate to my work and my research. I think I was drawn to action research not only because it made sense at the rational level - being directly useful - but because of the familiarity of its assumptions, purposes and patterns. The methodology I evolved for my research is based on repeated cycles of theorising, planning, action and reflection. The idea of such learning cycles was familiar to me from my background and training in the nonviolence movement, and is fundamental to the kind of training workshops which I facilitate. The correspondence between action research methodology and the

nature of my professional practice pleases me greatly. It is also potentially confusing, in terms of levels of reflection. I have tried to keep these distinct in my writing, but it has not always been easy.

The assumption behind my work is the assumption behind action research: that, in the words of Reason and Heron (1996: 6) 'practical knowing is an end in itself; and intellectual knowing is of instrumental value in supporting practical excellence'. Whereas action researchers have had to argue for the recognition and harnessing of the subjectivity of any inquiry process, the importance of the role and viewpoint of every actor is taken for granted in the participatory processes of ANV and CR training. The purpose of my workshops is to provide a context to act on these assumptions: to give participants an opportunity to develop certain skills together, through practice, and to develop a greater capacity to act effectively, through reflection on experience and theorising about it.

I wish now to discuss more particularly the relationship between the kind of training workshop I facilitate and the two forms of research with which they have most in common.

### **Participatory Action Research**

The form of action research most closely related to my work (as against my research) is Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR is based on Freirian ideas about the 'pedagogy of the oppressed' and holds the purpose of revolutionising approaches to knowledge - its ownership and use - and redistributing its power. In the words of Comstock and Fox (1993: 109), referring to the work of Orlando Fals-Borda,

Power includes the ability to define what is factual and true, and the more powerful are able to impose a conception of the world that supports their power..... Participatory research is a method of destroying the ideological bases of current structures of power by giving a voice to those who dwell in what Freire ... calls the 'culture of silence'.

Fals-Borda and Rahman (1991) explain PAR as a process for empowerment through conscientisation (Freire's term): the bringing of implicit knowledge into consciousness and making it explicit. It is a process which starts from where people are, 'their experiences, knowledge,

perceptions and rhythm of work and thought' and 'stimulating the people to undertake self-analysis of their life situations' (p. 136). This is how I would want to describe my workshops.

PAR, then, embodies a radical approach to education and to power, described by Fals-Borda and Rahman as being Gandhian, Marxist and humanist in inspiration: a very similar approach to that of nonviolence as mediated to me through the movement of which I was part, incorporating as it did the thinking of Gandhi, Freire and 'liberating education' (along with liberation theology), and the purpose of changing the structures of power. Often the participants in workshops I facilitate regard themselves as members of oppressed groups: oppressed by powerful neighbours, by the continuing effects and structures of colonialism, or by war itself. They see the workshops as a means of empowerment for action to change their situation.

The 'models for empowerment' (see next chapter on workshop content), which I use very often, were designed by Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr (1990) specifically as tools for conscientisation, group building and preparation for co-operative action. They provide the framework for a joint process of awakening and formulating understanding. They help participants to become aware of the nature and dynamics of the relationships under scrutiny, and of the possibilities for transforming them. In Freire's words, 'Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information'. These acts of cognition are brought about through a process of 'critical and liberating dialogue' and 'praxis'. Therefore education has to begin with

'the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers *and* students.'

(Freire 1972: 46). In the workshops I facilitate, I aim to use a largely elicitive approach in training, drawing out rather than putting in knowledge. I see myself as a facilitator of the discovery, development, organisation and application of knowledge and skills, and I learn from and with workshop participants, as they learn from and with me. Through their engagement in the workshop process, and through their evaluation and feedback, they have provided the material for my research.

I wrote at the outset of my research:



**'I want to make respect the core characteristic of my way of being as a facilitator, expressing itself both in the way in which I conduct myself in relation to participants and to my co-facilitator(s), and in the way I structure my workshops, using a largely elicitive approach, offering a framework for the exploration of the group's own experience and wisdom, though also respecting their desire to learn from what I have to offer and respecting my own depth of reflection and range of experience.'**

In that last clause I recognised that the role of trainer/ facilitator and the role of participant were not the same, just as in PAR, in Fals-Borda and Rahman's terminology (1991), the role of the 'animator', 'stimulator' or 'facilitator', is not the same as the role of the oppressed with whom they work; just as the educator's role, as described by Freire, is not in practice the same as the role of those (s)he engages in critical dialogue. Freire describes the educator's task as that of problem-poseur and dialogical partner, and although he does not make this explicit, this presupposes some authority to fulfil this role being given to the educator by the co-educated.

Comstock and Fox (1993), writing about 'Participatory Research as Political Theory', discuss the different positions and arguments within PAR on the relationship between the popular knowledge generated through PAR and the viewpoint of the outside researcher, acting as animator of the popular research process. On the one hand, the need is recognised to challenge and critique the (possibly 'false') consciousness of the participants; on the other hand, high value is placed on their self-analysis and self-critique. This dilemma is the same as the one I raised in my previous chapter, in my discussion of some of the issues around cross-cultural training and culture critique.

There is tension, then, between the student-teacher and teacher-student concept on the one hand, and the distinction nonetheless made between the role of the facilitator of the educational process and its other participants. It is a tension which I experience in my work and the way I think about it. I am helped and at the same time provoked into further unease by Peter Reason and John Heron's thinking about authority, in their discussion of 'A Participatory Inquiry Paradigm' (1996). Using the term 'hierarchy' to describe the exercise of authority (referring to the work of Bill Torbert), they propose that educational processes calculated to promote 'human flourishing' (the purpose which provides research with axiological validity), will enable 'a balance between people of hierarchy, co-

operation and autonomy'. The hierarchical exercise of authority 'is authentic when it seeks the developmental emergence of autonomy and co-operation' (Reason and Heron, 1996: 5).

William Torbert (1991), exploring the notion of balance in the exercise of leadership and the process of inquiry, discusses the role of what he calls 'unilateral power' in 'transforming leadership'. Again, the goal of the leader's power is to contribute to the autonomy of those in relation to whom leadership is exercised. While the function described by Reason and Heron and by Torbert - the function of contributing to the developmental emergence of autonomy and co-operation - is a function I endeavour to fulfil, I remain uneasy. If I am invested with that function by others, if it is recognised and wanted, then it can be said that I have been given authority to exercise it. (See Boulding 1978). That seems to me, however, to constitute 'authority to', rather than 'authority over', and so not to be hierarchical. And while I often accept a leadership function, I would not accept the kind of authority with a group which says, 'What I say goes, whether you like it or not'.

I feel more comfortable with the thinking and terminology of 'Women's Ways of Knowing'. In the chapter on 'Constructed Knowledge', the authors describe the function of the 'connected teacher' (Belenky et al, 1986: 227):

'A connected teacher is not just another student; the role carries special responsibilities. It does not entail power over the students; however, it does carry authority, an authority based not on subordination but on co-operation.'

In this model of teacher authority, it is used more to support than to challenge, and a teacher's task is 'to discern the truth inside the students' (p. 223). Challenge is seen as synonymous with doubt, and it is claimed that women on the whole find being doubted undermining, not energising.

More often than not, I work with gender-mixed groups. I am sure that different participants have different expectations and preferences in terms of the leadership exercised within the workshop process. I have not focused in my research on whether or how I have behaved differently towards participants according to their gender; but the manner of my exercise of leadership is constantly under question, including the tension involved in holding the balance between equality and difference; between openness to what emerges and the role of challenge.

'Animators' of PAR apparently feel entitled to challenge the 'false consciousness' of the oppressed, when it is detected. They also see themselves as taking sides with the oppressed. PAR is undertaken with clearly defined political purposes and viewpoint, which overlay the research process with a strong framework and, perhaps inevitably therefore, boundaries for thinking. In this it is very reminiscent of nonviolence training. (As I suggested in the last chapter, CR is not so ideologically - or stylistically - prescriptive, but is probably just as definite about what constitutes constructive or destructive behaviour.) This element of closedness has a bearing on the question of facilitation and challenge. If there are already answers, the facilitator's questions are not really open ones, and 'wrong answers' will need to be somehow marked as such.

While I want to be genuinely open to the experiences and views of others, I also wish to feel free express, as a facilitator, the values and understandings which are important to me. Equally, in my research process, I have tried to be genuinely open to what might emerge, while at the same time acknowledging and holding to (albeit, in the end, provisionally) these same values and understandings. I have at the same time benefited and learned from the skill of my own supervisor, who has demonstrated to me the possibility of being thoroughly supportive while at the same time drawing me to greater clarity and self-challenge.

My workshops, then, share the emancipatory purposes behind PAR, and I bring to them much of the passion and conviction which characterise PAR's discourse; discourse which coincides quite closely with that of ANV. However, in my work this strong ideological frame is softened by a more pragmatic openness, which corresponds to some extent to the CR approach. My facilitation style is, perhaps, on that account, less directive than, I feel, that of PAR animators must be. I hope that my research attitude, as well as my work, is characterised by value-grounded openness.

Peter Reason and John Heron, cited above, have written extensively about Co-operative Inquiry, which is the other approach bearing some correspondence to my work. I will go on to discuss that correspondence and its limits.

## Co-operative inquiry

According to Peter Reason (1994), in his presentation of 'Three Approaches to Participatory Inquiry', Co-operative Inquiry is rooted in humanistic psychology, and the concept was first formulated by John Heron (1971), and developed over the years that followed by both Heron and Reason. Heron's reasoning was that those who were the subject of research, being indeed self-determining human subjects, should not be objectified but regarded as co-researchers, 'co-subjects', and actively included in the design and execution of the research process. Not all those involved in the 'inquiry group' thus formed would have the same role, however. For instance, the initiators of the research may act as facilitators. Through discussion in the group, the goals and procedures of the research are agreed, and are then applied in the everyday work of the participants, who meet periodically to compare their experiences and findings. The outcomes of this co-operative research process, in terms of visible products, may be several, including such things as a report owned by the group as a whole, and a dissertation or thesis written by the initiator.

The role of the co-operative inquiry facilitator(s) can be compared to my role as workshop facilitator, except that although the participants and I have an agreed agenda and questions, I do not usually participate in all aspects of the process I facilitate. My primary function is to facilitate the learning done by others. My workshops consist of cycles of learning in which an idea or question (for instance about the dynamics of hostility) is presented, then tested or elucidated in dialogue. The dialogue may include the facilitator at some point, but may also be held largely between participants, in relation to their already existing experience. It may also be experimented with in some way: through experiential exercises, or through theoretical application to participants' current reality outside the workshop. The cycle is completed by reflection on what has emerged from this exploration process, and the formulation of tentative answers to the original question, or the confirmation, modification or elaboration of the original idea.

The inquiry process contained in my workshops does not constitute 'research' in the formal sense. A great deal is condensed into a very short time, and the experience-based and experimental processes take place on site and within the group, rather than being carried out largely elsewhere by individual group members in their daily work. Participants will, however, draw very much on experience in their own lives and contexts. The purpose of the workshops, like the purpose of Co-operative

Inquiry, is to generate experience-based, practical knowledge that will be of direct relevance to those involved in the process, helping participants to equip themselves with new frameworks for understanding, and new ideas and skills for use in action.

Although these workshops have constituted the action element in my research cycles, my primary purpose in them has been to fulfil my role as (co-) facilitator in the co-operative endeavour of inquiry into conflict and its handling, and the practice of related skills. My secondary but overarching purpose of ongoing research has been one I held alone. I alone have been responsible for it, and at the same time I have been dependent on the participants' engagement with me in the workshop process in order to have anything to learn from and reflect on. And I have needed the 'triangulation' provided by the feedback of participants on the workshop process. I have also needed feedback from colleagues (who knew about my research) on more specifically focused research questions (for instance, about some aspect of my behaviour or theorising), and on my workshop accounts and interpretations.

The knowledge-generating process of workshops has not, in itself, constituted my research. It has, however, been a major part of its process and provided the material for my ongoing reflection and writing. I am both reflecting and learning with participants within the workshop process, and reflecting on and learning from these same events on my own account, at another level and with wider references. One challenge for me has been to achieve a level of awareness and recall which is outside the workshop process, reflecting on it, at the same time as being thoroughly engaged in what is happening in the moment.

I hope that, in addition to developing new ideas and skills, at least some workshop participants go home with a new level of awareness - particularly self-awareness - for their own day to day life and practice, in order that they may be able to act more choicefully, and therefore powerfully, in the implementation of their skills and ideas. Raising my own level of awareness has been, perhaps, the most important, overarching purpose of my inquiry. For this and other reasons which I will explain, my research approach - as against the nature and purpose of my workshops - coincides most closely with that of Action Inquiry.

## Action Science and Action Inquiry

The personal process of reflection in action - of working to increase my own awareness in practice, and my understanding of that practice and of the assumptions which underpin it - can best be described as Action Inquiry. This research approach was developed by William Torbert and others from the concept of Action Science, elaborated initially by Chris Argyris and Donald Schon (1974). Its rationale is summarised thus by Argyris (1985: 1):

'We are accustomed to distinguishing between theory and practice, between thought and action, between science and common sense. Action Science proposes to bridge these conceptual divides.'

Action Science proposes the use of 'critical theory' to 'engage human agents in public self-reflection in order to transform their world' (Argyris, 1985: 2). This will mean openness to what emerges, rather than an attempt to control outcomes, and a recognition of the subjective involvement and personal responsibility and choices of the researcher. Since it is the researcher who poses as well as solves problems, Argyris and Schon (1974: ix) argue for the need to 'become aware of both espoused theories and tacit theories that govern behaviour'. Schon enlarges on the notion of practitioner awareness (in surprisingly unaware sexist language) in 'The Reflective Practitioner' (Schon 1983). He suggests that the examination and testing of frames and theories for and in action is one of the purposes of action based research. My exploration of the meaning and usefulness of the concept of respect, as a fundamental value for constructive approaches to conflict, has been a kind of fundamental frame-testing exercise, carried forward through repeated cycles of action and reflection. The ideas and diagrams which I have used and developed, to help those involved in conflict understand its structures and characteristics, and their possibilities for action, have been secondary, theoretical framings. They too have been tested and modified in action, through successive research cycles (which will be described more fully in the next section).

Action Inquiry, like Action Science, integrates research and practice. 'In action inquiry the practitioner integrates study and action, taking the role of an 'observing participant.' (Torbert, 1991: 228). Reflexivity is one of its preconditions, since it is a process in which 'The researcher's activities are included within the field of observation and measurement along with the study of other

subjects'. (Torbert 1981: 147). Reason and Heron describe the quality of awareness needed as 'critical subjectivity', which 'involves a self-reflexive attention to the ground on which one is standing' (Reason and Heron 1996: 3 and 4). I hope to demonstrate that I have subjected my experiences and responses to what I have experienced in the course of my research to this kind of critical examination.

Schon (1983), discussing the way in which we can combine these different forms of attention, argues that our primary knowing is tacit or intuitive, knowing-in-action, and this can be brought into, and elaborated through, successive layers of consciousness. Reflecting-in-action, thinking on one's feet, which brings intuitive knowledge into consciousness, can also, in turn, be reflected upon, to produce theories for action. So also, the entire process of learning through action may become a matter for study. In a similar vein, Bill Torbert ( in Reason and Rowan 1981: 148) is clear that an 'attention capable of interpenetrating, vivifying, and of apprehending simultaneously its own ongoing dynamics and the ongoing theorizing, sensing, and external event-ualizing' is the 'primary medium' of 'human inquiry'. I hope to give evidence of a quality of attention which embraces these different levels of reflection. To develop the capacity to work with such awareness was one of the main purposes of my research.

In Torbert's thinking, the researcher's attention must operate not only at different levels, but in four distinct 'territories of experience': consciousness (or vision); strategy (or thought); action (or embodiment) and the outside world. (Torbert, 1991: 227, 228.) In other words, the researcher has to learn to bring into awareness all these things: what is directly experienced, the thought processes which that experience engenders, the actions which result from that thinking, and the external circumstances within which these internal processes take place. Action research is based in the experience of embodying thought in action in the outside world; but the key to valid discovery through that action is the inquirer's capacity to hold together, in the midst of action, an awareness of her/ his own inner world of needs, values, past experience and the way that existing world will be influencing current perceptions, and the purposes she/ he holds. The interpreting and further thinking done by the researcher in relation to her/ his action and its apparent effects, will also be influenced by this inner world, and at the same time will change it.

These four worlds of experience that Torbert describes as distinct territories are in practice experienced together. What is important for the researcher is to include them all, and their relationship, in awareness, relating thought to action - acting reflectively; relating her own inner experience to what appears to be going on outside; relating her thoughts to the inner ground from which they spring; watching how the inner world of understanding and purpose affects her actions. According to Torbert (1991: 232) the 'action inquiry paradigm'

'functions to widen awareness rather than to restrict it, and invites testing of any implicit assumptions and incongruities that may be embedded within it or within practice purporting to be based on it.'

Noticing one's own assumptions is a hard task, but one which sheds a great deal of light on one's own behaviour - its nature, motivations and effects - and on the corresponding assumptions and behaviour of others. Observing incongruities between what appears to be happening in different territories of experience - and between different episodes of it - can not only alert the researcher to unfounded or misplaced assumptions, but create new openings and bring fresh insights. In order to be open to the recognition and acceptance of incongruities, the researcher must be not only alert, but open. This calls for awareness of her/ his internal preconceptions and defences, and a willingness to be challenged and to change. At the same time, holding to any purpose presupposes a degree of steadfastness, or a sense of direction. Keeping alive an embracing awareness, keeping boundaries open, at the same time as maintaining an effective focus, is far from easy. It requires not only vigilance but, according to Torbert, balance: balance between 'inquiry and effectiveness, awareness and action, timeless principle and timely practice, dynamic change and stability' (Torbert, 1991: 232). This question of balance is one to which I will return in my conclusions.

Whereas Torbert describes four territories of experience for inquiry, Heron (1992) describes four forms of knowing. The object of the inquiry process is to bring our primary, subjective, experiential knowing into awareness, and to relate it to the other three forms of knowing: that is, presentational, propositional and practical. Behind these forms of knowledge, according to Heron, lie four human worlds: the world of emotion; the world of imagery; the world of discrimination and the world of action. Through the exercise of presentational knowing, what is experienced is given form which communicates that knowledge (whether in words or art of another kind); through propositional



knowing, experiential and presentational knowing are translated into concepts. Practical knowing, the ability to do things, enables all the other forms of knowledge to be expressed in action. In bringing the world of experience and emotions into the world of imagery and presentation, intuition is needed; in the movement from presentation into theory reflection is needed; for the transfer of theory into practice, 'intention' is needed. The interaction of these worlds, like the interaction between Torbert's territories, is constant, and portrayed by Heron as cyclical.

I note with interest that Heron's diagram (1992: 158) both clarifies his thinking for me and provokes my own arguments - which is the effect I want my own diagrammatic presentations to have on others. While it is useful to be aware of these separate worlds of being in which we live, and the different forms of knowing open to us, my experience of presentational and propositional knowledge is that they constantly inform each other, in perpetual interaction, rather than in simple cyclical sequence; and for me presentational and practical knowledge overlap each other substantially. I want the presentational forms and propositional content of this thesis to give evidence of, and do justice to the practical knowing which is my primary goal, and was the intended outcome of my inquiry as a practitioner, and to the thinking and theorising which have informed it. At the same time, the task of presenting my knowledge has contributed to it. It has involved in an intense and fruitful way a further phase of thinking about what I have experienced, through which new understandings have emerged. Since I work as a trainer, practical knowledge for me is very much about presentation, and therefore propositional knowledge about how to present ideas is one of the research outcomes I have been looking for.

The principles of Action Inquiry outlined above are closely related to the question of validity, which I shall discuss later. Validity is an outcome of good research practice, of which one aspect is dialogue with colleagues. I shall discuss next my own research situation in this regard, and the way I dealt with it.

### **Solo inquiry**

Torbert's idea of Action Inquiry is that it will be conducted in a 'community of inquiry', a 'group of people ....committed to discovering propositions about the world, life, their particular

organization(s), and themselves that they will test in their own actions with others.' (Torbert, 1991: 232). I do not have regular colleagues, and when I embarked upon my research I was very new to my work. It never occurred to me as a possibility that I could invite occasional colleagues to form a group with me and enter into a co-operative, research process. I felt like a beginner among relative experts, and something of an outsider coming in. It was partly to overcome this sense of inexperience and lack of expertise relative to others in my field that I decided to work for an Action Research degree. I wanted to 'catch up' - so I had to do it on my own. I would not have had the confidence to invite others in my field to join me. If I were starting again now, things would feel different; but in so far as that is true it is because I have been on what has at times felt like a lonely journey.

This aloneness has been offset by many things: primarily by the support, challenge and stimulus which have come from time spent with my CARPP supervisor and colleagues. Our regular research group meetings have provided me with a base to report back to. Through describing episodes of my work to others, and through their questions and observations, I have been helped to clarify my thinking and check my reactions and interpretations, and given new ideas to consider. Through listening to their accounts of their working and thinking I have found new perspectives on my own. I have also had the company of working colleagues, who have been co-actors and thinkers during workshops, and have given me feedback afterwards, both on my performance of my role and on my accounts and interpretations. I have learned, as I said earlier, through interaction with workshop participants, who have provided me with primary material for reflection and given me feedback, both personally and via the workshop evaluation process, on the content and facilitation of my workshops. I have been further challenged, stimulated and helped in my thinking by endless conversations with particular colleague-friends.

Judi Marshall's description (1981) of her own research process encourages me to think that to be the sole carrier and author of a piece of research has some benefits, as well as drawbacks. She articulates a feeling and viewpoint which I recognise: that to interpret data from one's own, personal perspective, without 'arguing the toss' with other people, has its own value, and that to look at the data from different perspectives

'might be trying to intellectualize it and bring it down ..... And while it is important for me and for others to recognize my bias, it really is what I can give as a researcher, it is my contribution' (Marshall, 1981: 399).

Clark Moustakas, writing on 'Heuristic Research' (1981: 211), quotes Polanyi:

'Into every act of knowing there enters a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is known, and .... this coefficient is no mere imperfection but a vital component of his [alas, sic] knowledge.'

The kind of personal knowledge about which Judi Marshall is writing, and which I am trying to develop, is already the outcome of intersubjective processes. In the end, however, the interpretation, presentation and conclusions are those of one person: personal. Writing on 'Research as Personal Process', Peter Reason and Judi Marshall (1987: 112) assert that 'All good research is *for me, for us, for them*.' It is firstly for the researcher, relevant to her/ his world and action. At the same time it will be relevant to those who live and work in the same field of action. I will also produce some insights which are of more general use and application in a wider academic community. I wanted to become a more aware and effective practitioner. That was my primary purpose in undertaking my research. But I intended also that the level of my attentiveness, as well as emerging theories of action, would have both an immediate and a longer term impact on the way I worked as a trainer, and therefore on the participants of my workshops. My research has been for the 'users' of my practice. I hope it may also be of interest to fellow trainers, doing similar work in a cross-cultural setting. Lastly, I hope in this thesis to offer some ideas about training, intervention more generally, and the nature of conflict, which will be useful not only to practitioner colleagues but in the wider world of thinking about human conflict and responsibility.

## MY METHODS FOR ENGAGING IN ACTION INQUIRY

I have been pursuing this research, since the Spring of 1994, through cycles of theorising, planning, action and reflection. Since the pattern of my work is unpredictable, and its nature varied, I needed a research pattern which was as simple and flexible as possible, and which would nonetheless give

me a clear frame to hold onto, particularly since my respect-related questions were so complex and wide-ranging in themselves. I therefore decided to use each relevant workshop that I facilitated (I run other workshops which are not cross-cultural or specifically about nonviolent approaches to conflict) as a cycle of enquiry which I entered with a question or experimental task in mind, which I would carry with me through the workshop, recording what happened as I went, and reflecting on it afterwards and writing down my findings. The new ideas and perspectives which emerged would be further tested in subsequent workshops, incorporated into further cycles of inquiry.

Sometimes I went into a workshop with particular questions in mind, some specific aspect of my being-at-work to observe, some model or theory to test. At other times I stayed with my overarching questions about the meanings and applications of the concept of respect in the workshop. This included the ways in which I embodied (or did not embody) respect in my way of working. It also included respect as embodied (or not) in the honesty of the theoretical content of my training input: its correspondence to real life, its roundedness, its capacity to help enable and contribute to lasting change.

I kept a journal from the outset, chronicling workshops in detail, describing my own feelings and responses, and sometimes including thoughts and observations of a more general kind, about the nature of respect and particular aspects of training. (Keeping a journal was not an entirely new habit. I had, at different times in my life, and to differing degrees, kept note-books for recording and clarifying thoughts; so the writing-thinking process which has been so crucial to my action research was an intensification of practice which had been, hitherto, occasional.) I then wrote accounts, often quite detailed, based on my journal records, of entire training workshops, which usually lasted a week or more. These accounts were descriptive, reflective and evaluative, and in all of them I maintained a focus on the concept of respect. The notes on which they were based were written daily - or more often nightly - and sometimes several times a day, and included a record of feedback from the daily evaluation process used in the workshop. At the end of a workshop, I added to these notes my own post-workshop reflections and responses to the notes, and new thoughts prompted by participant evaluation and feedback from colleagues - a record of which is included in my accounts. These workshop records include detailed descriptions of particular moments of interaction, specific things said or done, and more general thinking which arose from the particular context in which I found myself. They also include reflections on my experience of

enquiring in action. Together they constitute the 'basic empirical material' (Reason and Rowan 1981: 149) for this thesis.

(Taping of any kind would have been logistically difficult in my workshops, and its management potentially distracting and disturbing to me and participants. It would, additionally, have produced an unmanageable amount of data, unless it had been selective; so I preferred to do the selecting as I went. Since the use of memory (sometimes aided by notes) to record detailed observations in workshops is a skill I have had to develop as a facilitator, I have not experienced this as a problem - except in as far as it required me to write up my recollections and observations late at night, and was tiring.)

Since the records of my work and reflection-in-action constitute the empirical data for my research conclusions, my research's validity will rest on their quality: in terms of care and detail, and of reflecting multiple levels of awareness and inclusion of uncomfortable data; in making multiple cross references between different viewpoints and implied perspectives, and including corroborative evidence. I need to convince my readers of the attempted honesty of my accounts and the reasonableness of my interpretations, while owning them as mine. I will explore the question of validity in my next chapter section.

## VALIDITY

I want to begin this discussion not with the question of the validity of data, but with the more fundamental question of validity of purpose: what Reason and Heron (1996: 5) call the axiological criterion. Is my research 'intrinsically worthwhile'? My purpose is to enable myself to contribute more usefully to the development of human capacity for the constructive handling of conflict (and thereby to a reduction in the suffering caused by the violent expression of conflict). I believe that is worthwhile. If co-responsibility and mutual care are fundamental human values, as intersubjectively established social norms would suggest, and if such workshops make any contribution to the overall purpose for which they are designed, as I believe my accounts will suggest, then I can claim that mine is a worthwhile human endeavour. As Kvale points out in his discussion of 'The Social Construction of Validity', 'Deciding what are the desired results involves values and ethics' (Kvale

1995: 35). Validity understood in this way concerns fundamental values and motivation, and the will and passion to act. Practical knowledge presupposes a grounding of understanding which gives rise to purpose.

Taking an ethically determined purpose as given - cf Reason and Heron's 'axiological' validity (1996) - Kvale names three forms of research validity: validity as 'quality of craftsmanship'; 'communicative validity' and 'pragmatic validity'. There are many ways in which different forms of validity can be categorised. Although I would prefer to be a craftswoman or person, Kvale's categories will provide me with a useful framework for my own discussion. I shall explore them in turn, explaining how I am expanding or adding to them.

### **Validity as quality of craftsmanship**

This aspect of validity includes, in Kvale's meaning (1995: 27),

'continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings. In a craftsmanship approach to validation, the emphasis is moved from inspection at the end of the production line to quality control throughout the stages of knowledge production.'

It involves the practice of attention to all four of Torbert's territories of experience, and constant awareness of Heron's worlds of intention, feelings, intuition and reflection.

I have attempted to maintain the craftsmanship of this breadth of attention, both in the action of my practice and in the quality of my writing, the presentation of my experiences and reflections. What will be decisive is the measure of awareness, or 'critical subjectivity' I have been able to develop, 'arguing and thinking (Billig, 1987) within myself and with others, through the discipline of the many cycles of action and reflection, and rigorous record-keeping, that I went through. One thing to be judged is whether I was able, in my subjective reflections, to find some distance from the events in which I participated, and to be aware - as far as this is possible - of the personal assumptions and perspectives which provided the basis for my reading of them, and of the emotions which they engendered, checking my records for honesty in relation to my own recollections and understanding, and reflecting on them again at a distance.

Such a quality of awareness can be maintained, according to Reason and Rowan (1988), only if the researcher engages in 'some systematic method of personal and interpersonal development' (Reason and Rowan 1981: 246). Without such attention, they argue, the researcher's perspective on what she/he experiences is in danger of being clouded or distorted by personal disturbances and projections. I do not believe it to be possible to see into myself with total clarity. Oversights are, by definition, unseen, and the more fundamental an assumption is to one's being, the more likely it is to remain undiscovered and taken for granted. However, I have used my research process itself, my interactions with others, and my discussions with myself while writing, to bring these shaping elements into consciousness, as far as possible.

In addition, my hours in Quaker Meeting have punctuated these years of my research with opportunities for letting distorted things straighten themselves out. The shared silence works for me in such a way that anxiety and self-concern slip away, letting different elements of my being and living fall into place. At times I have gone into Meeting with some knot of a question in my mind and come out with that knot untied: untied not by being picked at but by being left alone to untie itself. This is an experience I cannot adequately describe; still less explain or prove; but it has been important, at certain points, in my dealing with information and reaching clarity, and therefore as part of my research process.

The most important thing for me to address in myself has been my 'need' to excel in what I do in order to avoid feelings of inadequacy. I find balanced evaluation of events in which I am involved, particularly of my role in them, extremely difficult, and my desire to find I have 'done well' can induce me, albeit unconsciously, to 'improve on' the facts. I have tried to become less self-judging; partly for the sake of my own comfort, and partly for the sake of accurate representation and balanced evaluation - and evaluation of evaluation. I have two opportunities for representation and therefore distortion: firstly in relation to the 'given' of the workshop itself, as I record it, and secondly in relation to my accounts of those workshops, as I reflect on and re-interpret them - at which point my memory will also come into play, with attendant emotions, which may or may not be the same as the emotions experienced either at the time of the workshop or at the time of writing.

As I prepared myself for one workshop, I wrote in my journal,

**'Serious evaluation is as important as it is challenging. I think I have become quite good at opening myself to the evaluations of others: in the workshop context, both colleagues and participants; less good, perhaps, at evaluating those evaluations. I am so afraid of being defensive that I maybe fail to discount or set in context (sometimes take with a pinch of salt) feedback - particularly negative feedback - which my head could tell me is either unbalanced or otherwise unhelpful, inappropriate or unimportant.'**

**I am afraid of being defensive because I am over-exacting towards myself: immoderate. Anything short of total success is in danger of being regarded as total failure. Because I am aware of this tendency of mine to catastrophise, I am able to an extent to wrestle with it; but it is a struggle. My own internal evaluations, as well as my receipt of the feedback of others, also tend to take on the dynamic of a struggle between darkness and light, rather than an acceptance of both - and of twilight and dawn. I would like them to be more relaxed (not lax). I think that way I might be happier and more capable of sound and balanced judgement; also more enabled, as against disempowered.'**

To learn this balance for myself has become one of the underlying goals of my research. It is clearly vital to my 'critical subjectivity' (Reason and Heron, 1996). In addition to this work of 'managing unaware projections and displaced anxiety' Reason and Heron list several other areas of attention for the achievement of critical subjectivity, which it has been helpful for me to check. 'Attending to the dynamic interplay of chaos and order' for me has meant allowing things their own life, resisting the desire to control or tidy up - and therefore distort - information. This will be a challenge for me in the final reflections contained within this thesis, particularly since I have given myself such a broad research focus. There is such a wealth of variety in what I have done - the nature of the groups, the geographical locations of workshops and conflicts addressed, the dynamics set in play by the bringing together of different groups of individuals, the challenge of working with different co-facilitators - that it would have been tempting to select out and organise information, or to begin to shape conclusions at an earlier stage, in order to narrow the focus of later cycles of inquiry. However, I find support in John Shotter's observation (1993: 19, referring to Wittgenstein), that



'our commitment to thinking within a system from within an orderly or coherent mental representation - the urge in reflection to command a clear view ..... in fact prevents us from achieving a proper grasp of the pluralistic, non-orderly nature of our circumstances.'

I have, in the midst of the pluralistic, non-orderly nature of my research theme, attending, in Reason and Heron's words (1996: 5), 'to the dynamic interplay of chaos and order', maintained my focus on my four sets of questions throughout my research. I have also allowed my attention to be drawn to specific aspects of those questions, and surprising new angles, so that my initial framework has not been too restrictive to allow for reframings, or too rigid to allow for changes of emphasis and direction. (For instance, in Harare my initial focus was on testing workshop material and format, but the issues that arose and demanded my primary attention were those of North-South relations, group dynamics and the role of the facilitator.) In Torbert's terms, I have tried to maintain a balance between inquiry and dynamic change on the one hand, and effectiveness and sane stability on the other (Torbert, 1991: 232).

I am not sure whether Kvale (1995) would include sufficiency of material in his 'craftsmanship' category, but it seems to me that having enough detail of different kinds, an encompassing as well as focused attention - 'thick description' (Geertz 1925) of events internal and external - must be necessary to the validity of findings; also having enough comparable data to reflect on. To this extent, quantity is an aspect of quality. According to Reason and Heron (1996: 5),

'Research cycling is itself a fundamental discipline which leads toward critical subjectivity and a primary way of enhancing the validity of inquirers' claims to articulate a subjective-objective reality'.

I have been through many cycles of research, taking each workshop as a cycle, including its preparation, evaluation and reflection. The different workshops have been varied in many ways, but their purpose and style, and my research purposes, have been constant. I have described many workshops in considerable detail, and with many levels of attention, relating the contents, dynamics and outcomes of one workshop to those of another, trying to identify what was constant and what was contradictory or different, and to make some provisional sense of that, where I could. I have

also heard many different voices within a given workshop, which I have needed to try and understand, both in relation to each other: comparatively, and together: cumulatively.

These, then, have been some of the elements in my struggle to maintain the quality of my research attention and recording. I will go on to consider Kvale's next aspect of validity.

### **Communicative validity and corroboration**

Communicative validity for Kvale 'involves testing the validity of knowledge claims in a dialogue'. I have tested the validity of my tentative formulations of knowledge (I do not think I make 'knowledge claims') with a variety of categories of people, all of whom were in some way well qualified to help me in my thinking. In Torbert's account of Action Inquiry (1991: 229),

'the data is first fed back to participants in the research, wherever possible, in order to heighten awareness of incongruities, to serve as a corrective to further practice, and to test the respondents' perceptions of the validity and usefulness of the results.'

In one way my workshop participants are participants in my research; in other ways, as I have explained, they are not. Although much of my thinking is done interactively with them during the course of a workshop, and I sometimes tell them, informally, about my research, my research is nowhere on the explicit, collectively owned agenda of workshops that I facilitate, and often not mentioned at all. This could be seen as a lack of appropriate openness on my part; I see and intend it as a separation of my research purpose from my primary professional purpose and function as training facilitator, and a protection of the integrity of that primary purpose. (See the introduction to my Moscow account in Chapter Eight.) The participants and organisers of a workshop have (or certainly should have) a common understanding of its purpose - one which I share - and it is my job to help see that purpose fulfilled. It is relevant to my research purpose but does not coincide with it.

Corroboration or triangulation mechanisms and resources are an important form of validation for my 'evidence' at different stages, or within different layers, of my research, supplementing my subjectivity with other voices and giving me the benefit of other perspectives. I have tried to make

this possible within the workshop process itself (e.g. through other expressed points of view or comments made within the evaluation process), within some subsequent process (e.g. discussion and evaluation with colleagues), and in relation to my draft account and its interpretations.

One form of triangulation for my own perceptions, as well as a form of primary information is participants' workshop evaluations, given personally and through workshop evaluation procedures, sometimes in plenary sessions, sometimes via their base group process and representatives, and sometimes in written evaluations after the workshop has ended. Generally speaking, the feedback I receive from participants is not specifically given or elicited in relation to my question of respect. I feel that opportunities for evaluation and feedback should be related to the workshop's primary purpose, and free of questions which introduce an agenda not shared by participants. Furthermore, were I to ask separate questions in relation to myself, questions of such a personal nature, I am not convinced I would receive very honest answers - any more than King Lear could expect honest answers from his daughters when he asked them how much they loved him. I feel strongly that to ask for feedback of such a personal and value-laden nature would be intrusive and unfair; an abuse of my position and function, and therefore disrespectful. I believe also that the reliability of feedback so obtained would be suspect, to say the least - especially when given by participants from more deferential, less frank cultures.

So although I have relied heavily on participant response and feedback in my self-assessment, I have chosen to make deductions indirectly, from other evidence, such as the overall dynamics of a workshop, and the relationships formed, and from feedback not framed in terms of the respectfulness or otherwise of my behaviour. I have some evidence of the impact of workshops in the form of letters from participants, and subsequent meetings and conversations. In addition, I have asked colleagues (co-facilitators and workshop organisers) for specific personal feedback directly related to my research; feedback about some aspect of my behaviour, or material I use, or both. What I have done also, with recent cycles of research, is to send a copy of my research account to a colleague, or colleagues, for comment, as a means of checking my description and interpretation of events. I have been encouraged by the degree of confirmation this has provided, though maybe the absence of any major challenge or disagreement has been unhealthy. This form of corroboration by colleagues will be included in my data chapters with my workshop accounts.

Sometimes information is so general as to be easily overlooked as evidence, or left undigested - for instance, the overall way a workshop goes; the ethos that develops within the group; the openness and engagement of participants; the inclusion of those who were on the edge - the way they relax and become part of the group; the way we can laugh and cry together; the progressive devolution of power; our readiness to change course in response to changing energies and interests; and the final sense of something completed and something begun. Of course none of these things - or the failure to achieve them (which is not necessarily a failure), or other difficult or unwelcome unfoldings - can be laid at the door of one person. To think so would in itself be a profound disrespect, and a sign of creeping megalomania! However, since I am considering as one element of my research the way I fulfil my role as trainer/ facilitator, it is important for me to try to see how the progress of a workshop relates to my behaviour - how I have contributed to what is happening.

Although I have not been part of a group of researchers working together on the same inquiry, bringing my experiences, findings and dilemmas back to my supervisor and CARPP research group, as described earlier, has been invaluable for me, providing a home, a constant context, for the processing of feelings, ideas and information. My workshop accounts were read by my supervisor, and episodes from them described to members of the group. They gave me much needed feedback, challenging my assumptions and interpretations; supporting me in my endeavours to shape new understandings and questions. (Three of my CARPP colleagues came from a different cultural background from my own, being Afro-Caribbean as well as British, while I have no non-European background that I know of.) This was additionally helpful, given the cross-cultural focus of my research. I have aimed to be open to the questions and comments of colleagues, taking them seriously and being ready to shift my own position, but also weighing and evaluating them, and not abandoning my own point of view too eagerly.

Perhaps most importantly, I have tried to be in critical conversation with myself as I wrote and as I re-read what I had written, both as I transferred my journal notes into written-up accounts and as I re-read the provisionally finished writing, before and after receiving others' comments. I did not usually change my accounts as such, once they had been presented to others to read, except by small clarifications, or occasionally filling in some larger omission. I wished not to disguise what my original reactions and reflections had been. However, I often added new reflections in the

commentary framing my accounts, or incorporated this feedback into my ongoing process of questioning and learning.

These, then, are the ways in which I have tested my records and interpretations, and develop my thinking. I agree, though, with Kvale (1995), when he warns against over-reliance on the views of others for validation, saying it may 'imply a lack of work on the part of the researcher and a lack of confidence in his or her interpretations' (cf Judi Marshall, 1981, above). In the end I have to take responsibility myself, both for the data I have presented and the sense I have made of it, affirming my right to speak with my own voice.

Bill Torbert (1991) claims that the 'parts of speech' which need, for effective communication, to be kept in balance, are framing (providing the context for what is to follow), advocacy (proposing or presenting an idea or question), illustrating (clothing ideas with the flesh of experience) and inquiry (exploring the meanings and testing the effects of the things advocated). Again, these tasks are given in sequence, and whereas I recognise the importance of all four, I have found that the order in which Torbert places them has not always been appropriate, or simple, for me. I have struggled with framing, finding that it could emerge only from a long struggle with what I had experienced. My written accounts of workshops I have facilitated - which could be seen as illustrations of what I experienced in relation to my research questions, could not be framed in advance, but only after a long period of struggle to understand or digest their meanings for me. (This is similar to the way in which presentational and propositional knowledge (Heron, 1992) interact with each other.) The tentative 'advocacy' which has emerged has been made possible by that struggle to frame what I have experienced, and making any closure on the inquiry process, in order to complete this thesis, has been difficult. But knowledge has to find some stability in order to be effective.

I will now move on to the third of Kvale's aspects of validity: the pragmatic.

### **Pragmatic validity**

According to Kvale (1995), the most important form of validity is the pragmatic: whether the things done on the basis of the researcher's interpretations prompt changes in behaviour. I want my

research to have practical outcomes, particularly for myself, so that its benefits may be passed on to workshop participants. I do not wish my conclusions to be prescriptive in relation to the behaviour of others, though they may suggest some ideas for 'good practice', given certain values and objectives. And at the same time I would not want the idea that practical knowledge is paramount (Heron 1992) to invalidate the knowledge of those who are not able to express their knowledge in action. Sometimes, for instance in situations of severe oppression, the primary knowledge of experience and understanding, knowledge of what is valued, is not able to be expressed and tested practically for a long time; in extreme cases, maybe never at all. To me, that would mean only that that knowledge had to maintain itself without external validation. Nonetheless, given the possibility of action, one vital test of the validity of knowledge will be in its practical use.

Although the pragmatic validity of my research will be dependent on its craftsmanship and its communicative (or presentational) validity, it is the most important form for me, since it is the one which determines whether I have achieved my purpose of 'contributing to human flourishing' (Reason and Heron 1996) in the way I described at the beginning of this section. I want to increase my capacity to contribute usefully in three ways. First, I want to increase my own awareness in action. Secondly, I want to increase my own effectiveness in action by applying that awareness and by understanding what it is to live out the respect I try to promote; thirdly, I want to increase the subtlety and cogency of the fundamental understandings which provide the basis for my work, and the clarity and usefulness of the content and presentational forms of my theory. My theory may consequently be of use to others working in my field, as well as to the participants in my workshops. I shall need to demonstrate, or at least give evidence to suggest by what I write, that the first two goals have been to some degree achieved. The third cannot be fully demonstrated at this point, but some indications may be given.

The usefulness or fitness-for-purpose criterion of validity will be perhaps most readily assessed in relation to the theoretical contribution I have been developing. My thinking about the relationship between ANV and CR, and the way I have structured their combining in workshop agendas, has been tested many times. My thinking about stages and roles in conflict, which has emerged from this combining, and in turn has contributed to it, is intended as a tool for use by practitioners, both in conflict transformation itself, and in conflict transformation training. Its usefulness, therefore, needs to be assessed at both those levels: does it help people be clearer about their own situations

and how they can act in them, and does it constitute a well-honed training tool? To put it another way, does my theory correspond to, and help in relation to, participants' lived reality, and have I devised ways of introducing it, and enabling participants to engage with it, in such a way that its usefulness, such as it is, is readily available - and maximised -through the training process?

One important and unexpected form of evidence of usefulness, in relation to the ideas I have developed and put on paper, has been the way they have been adopted and published by others, in manuals, handouts, articles, and used in workshops by others. I suppose the fact that people who know me and my work invite me to do more, and that those who have worked with me are happy to have me again for a colleague, is also evidence of a general kind. I notice that my discussion of usefulness has brought me back to the question of evidence - and affirmation.

I have found in the process of writing that these different aspects of validity seem too closely involved with each other to be kept apart. I will close this section with some more general reflections on validity, claims and purposes.

### **Concluding reflections**

According to Clark Moustakas, in his discussion of 'The Validation of Heuristic Research', the final question for the new paradigm researcher must be, 'Does the ultimate depiction of the experience derived from one's rigorous, exhaustive self-searching and from the explications of others present comprehensively, vividly, and accurately the meanings and essences of the experience?' (Moustakas 1994: 33, 34.) He quotes Polanyi as describing the process of researching and sifting, reflecting and revisiting, as one in which 'certain visions of the truth, having made their appearance, continue to gain strength both by further reflection and additional evidence. These are the claims which may be accepted as final by the investigator and for which he [sic] may assume responsibility by communicating them in print.' I have no wish to make claims, certainly not final ones; rather to describe a process of exploration. I am sure the most important things cannot be measured or proved. Nonetheless I do recognise the process which is being described, and have reached a sense of strengthened conviction in some areas, tentative gropings towards understanding - even perhaps provisional conclusions - in others.

John Law (1994: 14, 15), discussing how to combine some sense of moral direction with the uncertainties inherent in human existence, is delightfully unpretentious in both style and approach. He recommends that 'we should not get dogmatic about what we turn up, about the stories that we tell', not 'take them too seriously..... puff them up into hegemonic pretensions'. Research is to be regarded as a process, 'So a modest sociology will seek to turn itself into a sociology of verbs rather than a sociology of nouns'; and (p. 18), 'a modest sociology, whatever else it may be, is surely one that accepts uncertainty, one that tries to open itself to the mystery of other orderings.' I want to hold both that openness and a moral, caring passion. Is that possible, I wonder? And is it possible for me be constantly rigorous and at the same time leave room for intuition and imagination? I need to hold both energies together, find a balance; but maybe that is necessarily the balance of oscillation: they cannot co-exist in the moment.

I also want to make space in my conclusions for 'unattached' reflections: thoughts that have been developing in me during this research process, or have leapt into consciousness at some point within it - maybe during a car journey or some conversation. They cannot be attached to some specific moment or episode in a research cycle, but have grown in the seedbed of this exploratory phase in my life, and emerged from the rich muck of impressions, information and stimulus which I have wallowed in and struggled to give form to during the last three years and more. These thoughts I will present as ideas for exploration, hints of possibilities, shadows and glimmerings of suggestions, distant beacons of conviction - not as 'knowledge claims' - and I hope that as such they will be seen to have a valid place in my thesis.

Kvale (1995: 37, 38), argues that, whereas a 'critical attitude towards knowledge claims' is necessary,

'When elevated to a dominating attitude, ruling the discourse of research, the quest for validation may ..... be self-defeating. A pervasive attention to validation becomes counter-productive and leads to a general invalidation'.

I think that must depend on the nature of the attention. I would like to apply a watchfulness that is relaxed and alert, rather than tense and hawk-like; which makes space for flow and expansion, but



returns regularly to checks and connections. And although I wish to have accomplished a scholarly piece of work with practical usefulness, I also want to draw the reader into experiences and feelings: to share something of what I have lived and felt in this working inquiry.

Beyond the production and validation of a thesis, I have been (re)searching for the capacity to be Schon's 'reflective practitioner'. I do not, however, want to lose the capacity for immersion, and 'spontaneous, intuitive performance' (Schon 1983: 49). I have sometimes been afraid that by becoming too reflective I would reach a stage of perpetual self-consciousness (as against self-awareness). I want to have developed the ability to reflect in the moment, but not to have lost the ability to lose myself in the moment (hoping still to be able to recall the moment for future reflection if need be). Such immersion, losing oneself in the business of participation, brings together the knower and the given, obliterating, in that moment, the distinction between them. It provides the material for the kind of reflection which leads to the articulation of knowledge. To be conscious of something is to have choice about it, to be able to continue or change or adjust it - as Schon describes it in the case of the baseball player, who notices that something works and repeats it. But sometimes thinking too much about the way to play a game makes a player lose the rhythm of it, lose the knack, the ability to incorporate subtleties of action too fine to be distinguished or consciously deployed. I so not want to have lost the capacity to lose myself in the training game.

I suppose I am looking for a capacity to be both reflective and unreflective: to move in and out of immersion and reflection. I want to find rhythm, and I know that if I try too hard I may make it less likely. I also want to find balance: the kind of balance William Torbert (1991) writes about. I believe in the kind of human development that he describes; and at the same time I am uncomfortable with the hierarchical way in which he describes it; which is to acknowledge an apparent contradiction in myself. While passionately motivated towards action for change, a quest for progress at all levels, I have another, very different but co-existing sense of what I want and what is appropriate: a sense which is related to being in, rather than trying to control and shape; a sense of the cyclical nature of things. I want to grow and change, but also to accept myself as I am.

Maybe the kind of 'living awareness' which Torbert (1991: 231) sees as the goal of Action Inquiry is the key to the way in which these two approaches can be held together, through the development of a capacity for transformative presence, and a process, a way of being, at the same time accepting

vulnerability, fallibility, and affirming - celebrating - possibility. And although I no longer believe in progress as a global project with a fixed end, I can commit myself to the attempt to live creatively in the world as it is, being part of a process of building and rebuilding. My hope is that the research process in which I have been engaged will have helped me and others to participate in that process.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### WORKSHOP CHARACTER AND CONTENT

In this chapter I want to give an idea of the style and content of the workshops I facilitate, the different contexts in which they take place, the different kinds of group with which I work, and the general purpose and ethos of the workshops. To do so, I have referred to, and used directly, written material developed in the course of my work.

#### **Overall approach: purposes and assumptions**

The stated purpose of the workshops, generally speaking, is to explore constructive approaches to conflict, and skills for handling it, in order to increase capacities for engaging in it and coping with it in positive ways, and reducing the violence associated with it. In practice, however, the purposes served by the workshops are wider. The following is a piece written during the early days of my research, in the Autumn of 1994, about work I had done before my inquiry officially began. It explains something of the way in which I understood the work I was increasingly being asked to do. It was written in response to questions from my friend and colleague Adam Curle, who was writing a book about grass roots peace work and ways in which it could be encouraged and supported. I tried to explain, for him, the purpose of the work I had done, with colleagues, in Belgrade; what I thought we were able to offer there, and my diffidence. Here is what I wrote, which he quoted (Curle 1995):

*'I'm not sure that I knew, to begin with, why we were going, except that we were responding to a request for help (described as training) from people who clearly deserved and needed it. I remember my - our - own diffidence, our questioning of the likelihood of our having anything adequate to offer. At one level I still find it surprising that we apparently did; but I also feel convinced now that our visits have helped.*

*Our process each time was to spend the first phase of the visit reviewing with the group their current situation and wants for our time with them, building together an agenda for the available days - an agenda constantly open to adjustment according to emerging needs.*

*What we have been able to offer has been, by our coming and our listening, recognition both of the importance and courage of the work being done by the group, and the need of those involved for solidarity and support. We have been able to share something of the emotions, try to understand the pressures and exhaustion, and offer encouragement and affirmation. This has in turn helped the group members to acknowledge and express their own feelings of pain and weakness, but also to celebrate their achievements and potential together.*

*We have in addition provided facilitation for the group as it sought to become a group, developing a common understanding of its purposes and deepening the relationships between its members - as well as working through conflicts and tensions. We have provided a framework for evaluation and planning, and the initial sharing of concepts and skills, which could be called 'training', was clearly of real importance to the group at the outset and provided a basis for the continuing self-development and external training and peacemaking work done by its members.*

*One other thing: the love and laughter and eating and playing which have characterised our times in Belgrade indicate the refreshment which has come to us all through this exchange. An exchange it has certainly been. I cannot begin to estimate the pleasure and learning that I have gained. But for our friends in Belgrade, this contact with the outside world has been a lifeline.'*

Rereading this I realise, not for the first time, but perhaps more clearly than ever before, that 'training' is a somewhat arbitrary word for a collection of functions of which a directly educational element is but one aspect - of greater or lesser importance or predominance according to the particular context. Whereas much of the work I do does have a clearly educational purpose, it is clear from this explanation of our work in Belgrade that the provision of emotional space and support can be an important - if sometimes unnamed - function of such workshops, and that the role they play in group formation can be of great value for future work and networking. Even when the participants are unlikely to meet again, they often carry a sense of support and community back into their own situations: a knowledge that there are others who share their aspirations and are working for the same purposes; people they have come close to, and who feel, for a time at least, like invisible companions.

I often feel embarrassed, re-reading things I have written about my work, by emotional phrases like 'love and laughter'; but at the time of writing they felt like appropriate expressions to use, precisely because of their emotion. (Maybe my embarrassment itself is what I would do well to question.) The 'refreshment', as I call it in this piece, that comes from the social aspect of these 'training'

events, can be a much needed contribution; and for those isolated and oppressed by violent conflict, the sense of being connected to supportive others outside their situation offers great psychological relief and support. However, the idea that the benefits of these workshops are exchanged between participants and facilitators, rather than bestowed by the latter, is borne out in my workshop accounts.

This applies not only to emotional support and satisfaction, but to learning about conflict; the 'sharing of concepts and skills called 'training'.' I have written at some length, in my Theory and Methodology chapters, about my approach to education and the role of the facilitator in training workshops. I sometimes put 'training' in inverted commas because it sounds prescriptive and suggests something mechanical - like teaching animals to do tricks. I use mostly elicitive methods, while recognising that I have knowledge to share. I use my own knowledge in several ways. In the first place, the way I structure an agenda is based on my understanding of what is important in conflict and in empowering processes, as well as on what I have learned about the needs and interests of the group I am working with. Often the inputs that I make come in the form of presenting a particular 'model' for describing or analysing conflict processes and relationships. These models are then tested by the group in relation to their own experience. Sometimes inputs I make are supported by written 'handouts' - to save participants too much note-taking and provide the opportunity for later reflection on ideas. I suppose the way I act as a facilitator is also a form of input - often described as 'modelling'. Since groups working intensively together for some time usually generate their own conflict, and the groups I work with often reflect in their composition something of the external conflict going on in their region, conflict handling skills need to be practised for real by facilitator and participants alike. (I discuss 'experiential learning' extensively in Chapter Nine.)

The modelling I try to do is based on the values I hold, which inform my approach both to training and to conflict, which for the purposes of this research I have chosen to summarise as 'respect'. When I was explaining to Adam Curle (see above) why I had gone to Belgrade, I said my colleague and I were responding to a request for help from people who 'clearly deserved and needed it'. This personal value-judgement, qualifying my desire to support the choices and actions of others,

reflects the fact that in doing this training support work I am led by my own values, and choose to work with organisations and individuals who, broadly speaking, share them.

The idea that third-party intervention, including training, should be responsive and supportive of local initiatives is, as I suggested in Chapter Two, a useful general principle, but needs to be balanced by the recognition that local partners will find it hard to know what to ask for if they have only a very vague idea as to what is on offer. However, both the decision to go and facilitate the workshop, and the agreeing of basic agenda elements with the group, can emerge through a consultative process; and the objectives of the workshop are agreed in advance, and made known to potential participants, if they are not part of the organising group. For instance, the organisers of the workshop I facilitated at Lake Balaton in Hungary (described later, in Chapter Seven), for women from different parts of former Yugoslavia, set out in their letter of invitation the following objectives, which I had drafted with them:

**‘To become a learning community, using our own processes to discover what living and growing together entails, benefiting from the challenge and support we can offer each other.**

**To examine and strengthen our beliefs and values in relation to the way we live and act.**

**To increase our understanding of the things which damage and divide our societies, looking at the dynamics of conflict and violence and considering ways in which we can respond creatively.**

**To identify and develop the personal and group skills and resources needed for such creative responses.**

**To enjoy together a time of refreshment and renewal.’**

I have also developed the practice of (sometimes, especially for longer workshops) setting out my assumptions at the beginning of a workshop. These will vary from one workshop to another, and

will include items which are specific to a particular workshop and group - as for example in the Harare, workshop whose full agenda is given below. I made a briefer, more basic list of assumptions for the resource pack of an international organisation, to which I was one of the main contributors:

**'That the kind of learning we wish to promote is best facilitated by participatory, interactive processes which draw and build upon the existing wisdom and experience of participants, and by attention to the processes and interactions of the workshop itself and the workshop community.'**

**That conflict usually has both personal/psychological and social/structural components; we wish to address both in our training.**

**That respect - self-respect and respect for others - is a value which can provide a sound and broadly acceptable basis for constructive approaches to conflict and for the training process itself.'**

(The inclusion of this last point by the organisation is an indicator, to me, that it is more than just a notion of mine - even if it came from me - but is a widely recognisable and useable idea.)

One key assumption which for some reason I have not included on this list, but which I always make explicit early in the workshop process, is that conflict itself is not necessarily something to be avoided; that per se it is neither positive nor negative, but simply part of life at every level. Since we live in relation to each other, we will inevitably (unless we remain static, frozen) at times rub up against each other, and sometimes meet head on. These clashes will be more or less vigorous or rough, and more or less uncomfortable or painful. The degree of friction which will be defined as conflict will be a matter of both personal and cultural interpretation. Since conflict is, almost by definition, uncomfortable to many of us, there is a tendency to think of it in purely negative terms, and to equate it with violence. Sadly, in all spheres of human interaction, from domestic to political and from local to international, conflict is often associated with violence and destruction, both physical and psychological.

The movement of change increases existing friction, and in situations of injustice change is needed. In such circumstances, conflict will be a necessary outcome of corrective action. A strong concern with justice is something that I bring to the work I do, and which I usually discuss, in one way or another, with partners and employers, at the workshop planning stage. It informs the mental frame and emotional energy I bring to my work, and is reflected in the way I think about what needs to be included in workshop content. The diagram presented in Chapter Two, with its accompanying text, under the title 'Stages and Processes in Conflict Transformation (elsewhere referred to as the 'snake' or 'stages' diagram) is an outcome of this concern: my way of meshing ideas about nonviolent struggle for justice with ideas about conflict resolution. It has become in itself a mental frame for agenda design, in introductory workshops intended to provide an overview of the different skills and components required for conflict transformation.

The thinking behind this diagram is based on the assumption indicated in my theoretical discussion: that injustice constitutes a form of violence, and is not simply to be accepted as the price for 'peace'. At the same time, I am strongly persuaded that violent struggle, whatever its goal, often becomes the major source of injustice and suffering in the affected region. That is why another assumption for the workshops that I facilitate (which, though not listed above, will have been implicit, if not explicit, in the pre-defining of any such workshop) is that its purpose is to explore nonviolent methods of conflict transformation. It will be clearly understood that it is not within the workshop's remit to explore violent options, or train for them.

Not only has the 'stages' diagram provided an excellent framework for my thinking in planning and structuring workshop agendas; it helps me to think about the situation and needs of the particular group I am going to work with, and where the main focus of our work is likely to be. It also acts as a kind of check list for what needs to be included. In the workshop itself, it can act as a tool for participants to look at conflict and violence in general, and help them to understand better the particular nature of their own situation(s) and its needs. It can also, I have come to realise, provide a framework for the *presentation* of the workshop agenda, making its rationale explicit and remaining (physically, on the wall) as a reference point at different times in the workshop. (That



does not mean it becomes a kind of Bible. Reference points can be used to define differences as well as agreements.)

I have used the 'stages' diagram to provide my own mental framework for the next part of this chapter, in which I shall discuss a few key resources which regularly play a part in my workshops. They are best explained here by the use of the 'handouts' I have written to give out to participants at the end of the relevant session, as a record of what was presented for discussion and experimentation at some stage during the session itself.

### **Active nonviolence**

The first such key resource is the set of three analytical models designed by Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr (1990) for use with those wishing to take action to overcome injustice: models which provide a framework for conscientisation and effective planning. The handout I have written includes a brief discussion of the philosophy and techniques of active nonviolence. Over the years of my research I have tried to reduce the philosophical part to what seem to me to be the essentials, using, as far as possible, everyday language, trying to avoid expressions like 'should' and to set a descriptive rather than prescriptive tone. I have also simplified what I write about nonviolent methods, reducing lists and typologies to a single paragraph. These changes reflect my wish to respect the variety of ways in which people feel and articulate their motivations, and the endless potential for imaginative and creative action, which may be discouraged rather than stimulated by ready-made categories. I felt that my own more practical list (which appears at the end of the handout) - a list of things to bear in mind when preparing for action - was more useful than theoretical distinctions between one form of action and another. Here is the text, with its accompanying diagrams:

### **ACTIVE NONVIOLENCE**

**Notes for discussion: one person's understanding, based on her own reflections on the thoughts, writings and experiences of many.**

**'Nonviolence' can be defined as a philosophy, an approach to life, and to personal, social and international relationships. It is also the word used to describe the actions or behaviour based on this approach. Nonviolence is active, not passive, seeing individuals as responsible for themselves and for each other.**

**Commitment to nonviolence presupposes a belief - not necessarily religious - in the positive potential of the human condition, and of human beings individually and collectively: a belief that each contains the potential for good and has a conscience which can be touched; that the humanity of each demands respect, even when their behaviour does not; that respect, for self and others, holds the greatest power for positive change, whereas violence, in any form, leads to destruction and more violence.**

**The philosophy of nonviolence is based on the understanding that the outcome of an action will reflect the nature of that action; that in fact the action is itself an outcome. When people act, or react, violently, they perpetuate violence and violate themselves as well as the other. When they behave nonviolently, their actions already constitute, in however small a part, the makings of a new relationship or direction. Respect, therefore, in nonviolence, governs both the goals of action and the processes by which those goals are to be achieved.**

**To struggle to overcome violence is to risk harm. While in violent combat the harm is inflicted on the adversary, in nonviolence it is accepted, if necessary, by the nonviolent actors as a consequence of their commitment, in order to break the cycle of violence.**

**The aim of nonviolent struggle is to overcome violence and injustice rather than to win victory over an adversary, and to achieve an outcome which meets the fundamental needs of all concerned, so opening the way for long-term reconciliation.**

## **MODELS FOR ANALYSIS, MOVEMENT BUILDING AND GOAL SETTING**

- from the work of Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr:

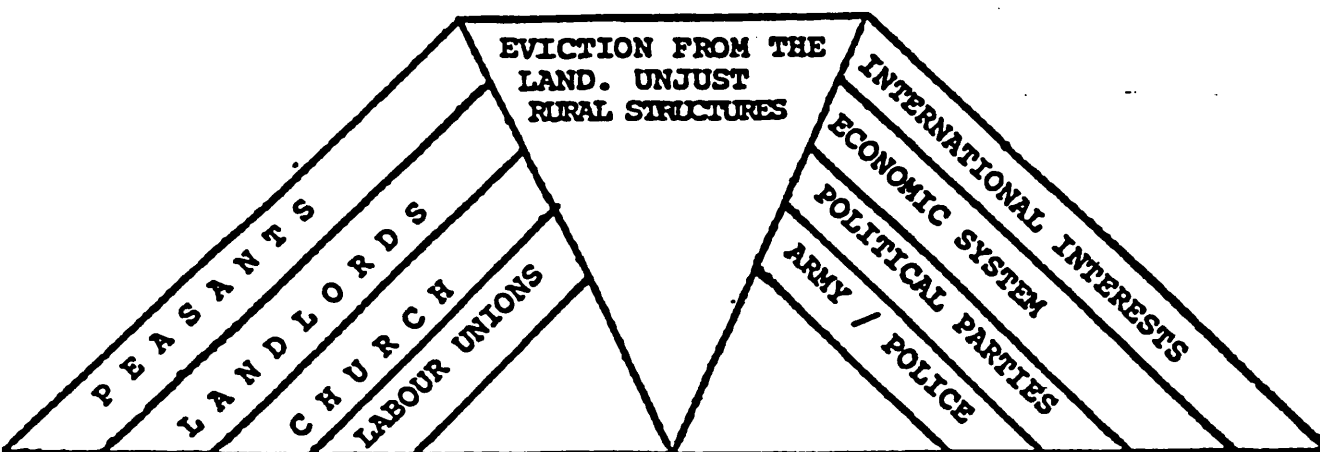
Groups are usually brought together by a desire to change something, and defining what it is they want to change, naming the violence or injustice they wish to remove, is their first task in analysing the situation - an important task and one which can take a long time.

### **Analysing the situation**

In this model for analysis, the oppressive situation or injustice is depicted as an inverted pyramid, held in place only with the help of certain props or pillars, that is by particular groups or sections of society which by their passivity, action or collusion support the status quo. Once the injustice has been defined, it is the task of the group doing the analysis to name these pillars which support it.

The example seen below is that of peasants living in the Algamar region of Brazil, who, having no legal documents to prove their ownership had been evicted from their family land by multi-national companies. They defined the injustice as shown. (They included the wider definition of 'unjust rural structures' because their experience was part of a wider process of land confiscation.) They named themselves as the first pillar supporting the injustice, since they had remained passive and submitted to the eviction. Then they named the other groups responsible: the landlord (the multi-national company), the Church, whose hierarchy wished to align themselves with the rich and influential, the labour unions, who had failed to act for them, the state army, acting for a government which supported the multi-national's acquisition of the land, the company's private militia, used to intimidate the peasants, the political parties which had supported the government's policy or failed to speak up for historic land rights, the economic policy and system which preferred foreign investment to the needs and rights of the local people, and the international interests which exerted so much pressure on the internal affairs of Brazil.

Fig.1

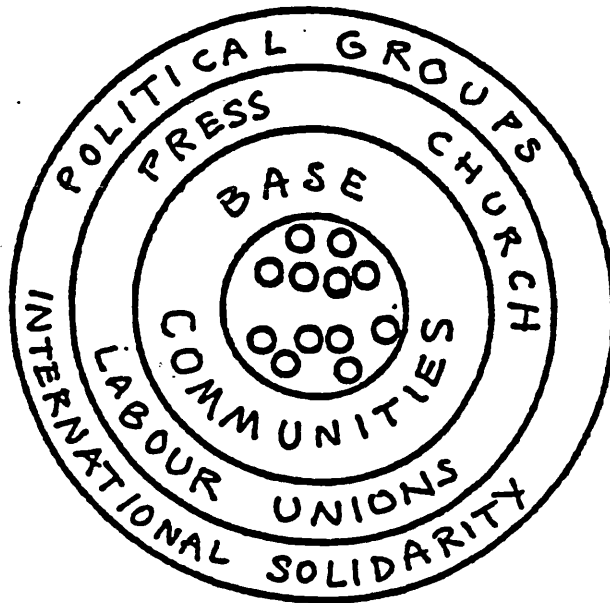


### Building support

Once the pillars have been identified, the group concerned can begin to consider how they can be removed or eroded. They must ask themselves why those they have named currently support the injustice and how they might be won over or persuaded to change. Realising they are at present small in number and relatively powerless, the group also needs to consider how to build support. In the second diagram, the Algamar peasants, who belonged to one Christian base community, are depicted as the centre of a campaign which will grow: first to include their most natural allies, the other base communities in their region; then, with their help, the Church at other levels, the labour unions and the press (who at this stage can be expected to be interested). With this much wider backing, the political parties can be approached,

and those in other countries who could bring pressure to bear on multi-national companies and on other governments, at the same time drawing attention to any repressive counter-measures taken in Brazil.

Fig.2



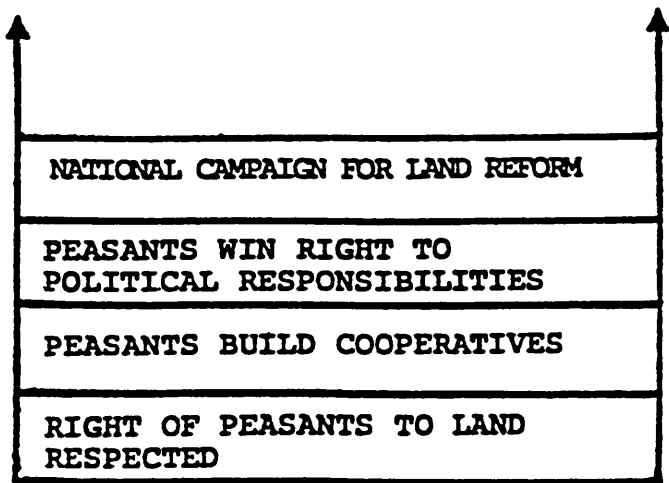
It can be seen that those who appear in the first diagram as props for the injustice in question can also reappear as potential allies in the movement for change. When such a transfer of allegiance takes place in reality, a considerable shift of power has been achieved.

### Constructive programme

It is not enough, however, for a group to know what it wants to get rid of - though it is a very good starting point. They also need to know what they want in its place. They need a vision, goals to work for, a new way of doing things that can start immediately, so that the new is being built before the old is demolished. This idea was central to Gandhi's understanding of nonviolence. He called it 'constructive programme'.

In the third diagram, the peasants' programme for the future begins at the bottom with their own local victory, then goes on to a process for developing their own efficiency and economic power, then to their inclusion in the political processes of their country and thence to a national campaign for land reform.

Fig.3



**METHODS OF NONVIOLENT ACTION**

Dialogue, sincere communication, is the first approach and a constant intention for those seeking change through nonviolence. Even at times when dialogue seems a distant possibility, it remains the aim of all action taken.

Public action is needed when those in power are unready to enter into dialogue, in order to raise public awareness of the nature of the injustice and to build support for the campaign. It can take the form of marches, street theatre, leafleting, vigils, fasts; sit-ins or blockades, or other actions which have a direct effect on what is being done, or symbolic actions against some specific manifestation of the injustice. These actions sometimes entail civil disobedience or the deliberate contravention of laws related to the injustice. Noncooperation with the unjust policy can also be a powerful form of resistance - for instance if seamen refuse to carry nuclear waste and dump it

at sea, or if consumers decide to boycott certain goods. Different lists have been made of categories of nonviolent action, but whatever the action, the following points will be relevant:

- \* Actions are most likely to be effective when they are based on sound analysis and strategy, with careful estimation of their likely effect.**
- \* Imagination can be a powerful aid to communication; it is not enough to be rational: people need to be awakened if they are to be changed.**
- \* If actions are intended to attract media attention, careful thought needs to be given to how they may be interpreted and presented. Who are the intended recipients of the message and what will be the likely effect on them?**
- \* The quality of detailed preparation for the action will be a major factor in determining its likely outcome.**
- \* The inner preparation of participants as individuals, and the unity of their purposes and actions as a group, will help them behave in the ways they have chosen.**
- \* Participants need to have calculated the likely and possible costs of their action and to be prepared for them, both morally and practically.**

As I re-read this last list of points, I see that it remains quite prescriptive tone - as if I knew what was needed; my next thought is that I do know these things, from long experience, and that I want to stand by what I have written! As far as I have been able to judge, these materials and the processes which they offer have never been other than useful to workshop participants. They are often the occasion for real excitement, as participants apply the models to their own situations and find their experiences taking form and becoming more recognisable - capable of naming, managing and changing. In my experience of working with groups, these really are 'tools for empowerment'.

Discussing violence and nonviolence is more challenging in some groups than in others. I think it is appropriate for it to be challenging. It is a hard issue. Sometimes I work with groups and for organisations with an explicit commitment to nonviolence; at other times, although it is understood that violence, as a response to violence, is not our business there may be participants who have supported or been engaged in violent struggle of one form or another, and whereas they have come to the workshop to explore other options they may be quite sceptical, and at some level quite hostile. This will emerge from some of my accounts. The use of the Goss-Mayr models takes the whole group beyond debating and into testing. Usually they work through from analysis into action planning, and sometimes into a role-play of some particular bit of the action.

### **Group formation and dynamics**

Thinking about groups and their effective working is an essential component for work on empowerment and movement building. It is also relevant for the workshop itself, and usually forms part of the agenda. I often begin a workshop with a discussion of what, on the basis of participants' own experience, makes groups work well, and we use these ideas to formulate our own groundrules for working together. The groupwork that participants engage in to test out these models for empowerment provides one opportunity for tasting the energy and the difficulties which can come from the group work as such, and for practising facilitation skills.

### **'Conflict Resolution': problem-solving**

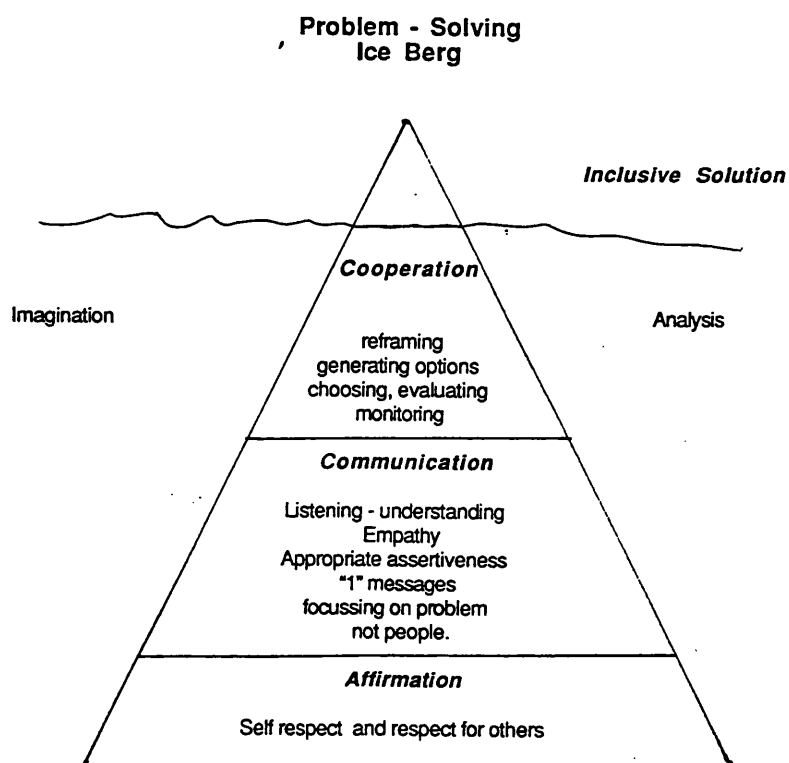
To structure thinking about the 'resolution' stage of conflict, I often use a diagram called 'the iceberg' (though a colleague recently suggested that 'the mountain' might provide a more positive image'). It is one which I first learned from Tom Leimdorfer (a fellow Quaker) when I worked with him in secondary schools. I have elaborated on his model little, so that it carries the what I consider to be the most important elements of 'problem solving' in the top section. (For instance, it did not originally include 'reframing', or 'evaluating'.) Another change I made was to replace the original



words from the middle ('Communication') section, 'Separate the person from the problem', with, 'tackling the problem, not attacking the person'. I made this change because I learned in the Lebanon the truth of what I had read: that in many cultures (and probably in my own), the person and the problem cannot be separated. And I replaced the 'win-win' label at the tip of the iceberg with the words 'inclusive solution', because, as I explain in my handout text, I find the phrase 'win-win' over-simple, and rather too jolly sounding for serious situations.

This model can be introduced in one go, or developed stage by stage in the course of a workshop. Either way, I find it a useful framework in which to develop with participants the idea of a co-operative approach to conflict, once it is ready to be solved (ie once relative power parity exists, and a will to move towards a mutually acceptable solution: the 'conflict resolution' phase of the 'stages' diagram.

Here is the diagram and the accompanying text:



The tip of the ice-berg, showing above the waterline, represents the goal of the problem-solving approach to conflict resolution; an 'inclusive' solution - one which is acceptable to all parties, meeting the needs and concerns of each. Such an outcome is often described as a 'win-win' solution. I prefer the term 'inclusive' because I think 'win-win' can suggest something rather simple and easy in which everyone gets just what they want - which I don't think is real. On the other hand, its implied reference to the opposite and very familiar idea that a conflict must always have winners and losers is a useful one to make.

The major part of the ice-berg, hidden below the waterline, represents the attitudes and efforts, skills and processes, which will be needed for such an inclusive solution to be reached. At the base is 'Affirmation', explained as 'self-respect and respect for others'. This includes a recognition of the needs, rights and identity of each person or group involved in the conflict. In real life, this may be a hard requirement, and the respect which can be found initially may be grudging or purely notional, emanating more from a sense of necessity than from any positive impulse. Feelings may be running high and prejudice may be strong. It may require the efforts of mediators to make any kind of respect seem remotely possible and to generate enough trust for dialogue to begin. But without such a basic recognition and valuing, it will be impossible for the parties to take each other and the process of problem solving seriously -or indeed to communicate effectively, which is the first need for problem solving.

Communication, then, forms the next layer of the ice-berg. Constructive communication both a symbolic and practical form of respect. It both enhances respect and helps to build an understanding of the nature of the conflict and the needs and perceptions of the different parties to it. The two sides of communication are indicated on the diagram: careful, empathic listening and sensitive, assertive speaking (most importantly, speaking in the first person, in terms of own needs and perceptions, rather than in the second person, in terms of accusations).

On the basis of respect and the opening of constructive communication, co-operation in the search for a mutually acceptable solution becomes possible. 'Co-operation' is therefore the heading for the next layer of the ice-berg, and the basic processes of problem solving are mentioned: reframing the conflict; shifting focus from positions to interests; generating options for contributing to a solution; evaluating and selecting from those options; reaching agreement on a settlement 'package' and how it is to be implemented. Since both analysis

and imagination will be required in the problem solving process, those two words are written down the sides of the iceberg.

### **Other handouts; work related to communication**

I have developed many handouts during the last four years, for instance on conflict dynamics, communication in conflict, reframing, and mediation, as well as one on groups and what they need to do their work well. To begin with I used other people's handouts, with acknowledgements; but as I became increasingly uncomfortable with what I felt to be the unhelpful cultural assumptions, the over-simplification and cheerfulness, or the over-prescriptive tone of the materials I was using, I decided I needed to write my own. At the cost, sometimes, of writing in a somewhat complicated style, I have tried to make them more modest in tone and in the claims they make, and to focus on attitudes and intentions more than on prescribed techniques. This has applied particularly in the case of 'communication skills'. The handouts I had seen tended to be characterised by counselling terminology, and techniques which seemed more appropriate for the consulting room than for 'normal' human interaction. I wanted something that was more general, and concentrated on attitude, and the importance of simply listening, and of sensitivity and respect even in assertiveness. Most of my handouts have been changed more times than I can count, because to fix ideas on paper, however tentative the language - particularly on vast and subtle subjects like communication - is to give them more definition than is helpful or warranted. On the other hand, participants seem to want something written, and to find it helpful to have something to refer back to, to refresh their memories of what has been said and done.

In addition to using experiential exercises in communication, I often explore with participants some of the things which block it; among them some of the feelings associated with identity and belonging; prejudice and the ready recourse to stereotyping, which close minds and hearts against engagement with what is actual and particular - in circumstances, groups and individuals. I try to encourage participants to bring into awareness some of their norms and assumptions and take a

critical as well as appreciative look at some of the groups they belong to - seeing that their belongings are multiple, forming a complex pattern, and are susceptible to evaluation and choice. I also introduce exercises which provide an opportunity for participants to explore the ways in which they deal with strong emotions in themselves and others, to increase both empathy and self-awareness.

The concept - and practice - of reframing is, to me, of great utility and therefore importance. I have already listed, in Chapter Two, the forms of reframing which I see as particularly important for problem-solving in conflict. One excellent tool for reframing, and one form of conflict analysis, which I very often use in workshops, is 'needs and fears mapping': an exercise, like those above, designed for use in real life, but also an excellent training tool because it can be so powerful in shifting perspectives and reframing not only *a* conflict, but conflict itself.

### **Conflict analysis and 'mapping'**

I took the idea of this kind of mapping from Cornelius and Faire's 'Everyone Can Win' (1989), but have rewritten the text, for the reasons outlined above. I have also prefaced it with some general remarks about conflict analysis. Here is my handout describing the exercise. I invite participants to draw their 'needs and fears map' in any way they like. I cannot adequately acknowledge the value of this exercise, and will always be grateful to its originators.

## **ANALYSING CONFLICT**

**Conflict and confusion often go together. Understanding what is happening is one step towards discovering what can be done to move things forward. Analysis can focus on the causes of a conflict - or what led up to it - or on the current situation (or both). It can concern itself with practicalities, 'facts', or emotions (or both).**

**Although acknowledgement of what has happened (or is perceived to have happened) in the past is often important in the long-term resolution of a conflict, shifting the focus from the past to the present and future is also an essential step towards resolving it. One form of analysis which bridges the gap between emotions and practicalities, and which helps in focusing on the future, is as follows:**

- 1. Listing the different parties to the conflict - all who have some stake or involvement in it. (Sometimes the list is longer than might at first have been expected.)**
- 2. Finding a definition of the issue or problem which is, or you think would be, acceptable to all those involved. (Not always easy!)**
- 3. Trying to think what are (a) the needs and (b) the fears of the different parties that have been listed. (Sometimes the fears listed are just a negative way of expressing the needs; but asking about them often elicits more deep seated concerns, which might otherwise have been overlooked.)**

**These elements can be arranged diagrammatically, with the definition of the issue in the centre, and the names of the parties, with their different needs and fears, arranged around it.**

**This exercise does not in itself attempt to deal with the different relationships of the parties to each other or to the problem; nor does it address the question of power. Nonetheless, in spite of (or perhaps also because of) its simplicity, it can be extremely illuminating. It can be used by anyone wishing to understand a conflict better: a concerned outsider, or one or all of the parties, separately or together (or both), with or without a mediator. In the end, of course, it is impossible to know the needs and fears of others without asking them; but to begin to think in these terms is already a step towards empathy - and away from demonising the other.**

**To focus on needs and fears can also help free those in conflict from a preoccupation with fixed positions in relation to it, and to focus instead on the interests they have which will need to be addressed in any future agreement. In addition, listing needs and fears often reveals the multiplicity of those interests and the need for several, or many, ingredients to be included in that agreement. By including all parties' points of**

**view in the definition of the problem, and by considering the needs and fears of each, this exercise helps frame the conflict as a shared problem which will need a common solution. If it can be done by the parties together, it can constitute a first, major step in co-operation.**

**The use of a rather simple diagram to help analyse complex situations of conflict may appear counterproductive. In practice, as suggested above, the mere attempt to understand a conflict in terms of a small number of simple elements may highlight exactly how complex certain aspects are. For example, many conflicts have not just one problem or issue, but many. Agreeing on a formulation or definition of the issue or issues may be half way to finding some solution. In social or political conflicts, parties are often not homogeneous or united, but have factions, leaders and followers, core members and supporters etc. To recognise these complexities gives the opportunity for designing appropriate strategies for response - which is the objective of such analysis.**

## **Mediation**

Although the attitudes, behaviours and choices of the actual parties to a conflict are primary, third parties can play a range of constructive roles in support of its positive transformation, acting either as advocates for one side or as impartial facilitators of communication between the parties. Those identified with one side may also choose a bridge-building role, which can be vital, rather than adopting a deliberately and simply partisan position or joining in the action for one side.

I try to help workshop participants to explore these options for action, and their constraints (see 'roles' text in Chapter 2). Somehow 'mediation' has come to symbolise or stand for conflict resolution more generally. Not many people end up as mediators of political conflicts in any formal sense, but most play that kind of a role, in some way and in some context, at different times in their lives, and in some form; and in socio-political conflicts mediators can operate at different levels to important effect; so I often give some time to thinking about and trying out mediation. (I have developed an accompanying handout which I sometimes use.) Mediation role-plays provide an excellent opportunity for testing listening and assertiveness, and practising empathy: skills which are

of importance across the range of constructive roles and behaviours in conflict. Recently I began also to explore with groups the question of how to help parties to reach the point where mediation seems a possibility - which is often in practice nine-tenths of the task. The relationship between leaders and their constituency is also a key area for exploration. The preparation of constituencies for negotiation, and somehow including them in the process, constitutes another whole area for 'conflict 'resolvers'. In a general workshop these issues can only be touched on; but in a recent, more specialised workshop, I had chance to reflect on them more, and see how crucial they are.

## **Recovery and Healing**

The healing processes which need to follow political settlement -and which will have been begun through the efforts which led to it - usually constitute the final topic of the general workshops that I facilitate. I often ask participants to think about their own experience of what can enable them to begin to recover from severe hurt and rebuild their lives and relationships. Working as I currently do with people who have suffered greatly in the violence and turmoil of what was Yugoslavia, who have in some cases lost most of what they had ever counted on, I sometimes doubt the likelihood (if not the possibility) of real recovery at any level - personal, social, material or political. It is hard to image that the damage to the psyche, both individual and collective, can ever be repaired; but then I know so many who seem to have performed miracles, and who find their own new meaning through helping others to recover. The human will to make sense of life and to go on living it seems to be both deep seated and resilient. I recently wrote some notes - very tentative - listing some of the things which, if I listen to others, seem to help. I am still influenced by the thinking of Ron Kraybill (1996), which I outlined in Chapter Two. I have used the word 'reconciliation' in the heading, because I am writing about a social as well as individual process. The word reconciliation names the restoration of relationships. It is the outcome and the enabler of individual healing; the reweaving of the collective fabric, which makes manageable - and eventually even tolerably comfortable - the interactions of daily life.

Here is the 'handout' I wrote. (I hate that word. It sounds as if these matters of life and death could be encapsulated neatly on a sheet of paper and dished out to people.) I notice that despite my efforts not to be prescriptive, it still has a normative ring.

## **RECONCILIATION AFTER CONFLICT**

**There must be countless definitions of reconciliation. Mine represents relatively modest ambitions: a return to relationships which are relatively comfortable and constructive, characterised by tolerance and a degree of mutual respect or acceptance, and providing the conditions for co-operative co-existence.**

**The establishment of such relationships presupposes a sense of justice. Unjust relationships constitute a hidden form of conflict. In situations where the powerful oppress the weak, that injustice needs to be rectified - which is likely to mean confrontation and struggle. The struggle may be undertaken violently or nonviolently, and either way may provoke a violent response. However, the spirit of active nonviolence has a power of its own. Its purpose is to uphold life and dignity, rather than to attack or destroy them. It can help transform the dynamics of violence and lay the foundations for a respectful and inclusive society.**

**For peaceful relationships to be restored, or forged, after violent conflict is particularly difficult. Human dignity has been negated and the seeds of hatred are everywhere. The following are some conditions which seem essential, and some processes which could help.**

**\* The cessation of physical violence: an end to any attacks or fighting, and guarantees of future safety.**

**\* Discovering, as far as possible, what happened (eg whether someone is dead and where they are buried - and, more contentiously, who killed them and in what circumstances).**



- \* The hearing and acknowledgement of different perspectives on what has happened in the experience of different groups or individuals.**
- \* Negotiations to address present and future needs, so establishing some sense of justice. This may include new political arrangements, a redistribution of power and resources, or specific acts of reparation which provide some material compensation and recognition of wrongs done.**
- \* Culturally appropriate processes for the personal healing and reintegration, both socially and economically, of those traumatised by the conflict - both victims and perpetrators of violence.**
- \* The rediscovery by individuals and groups of their identity and place within the new context, with a degree of confidence which can allow for the admission of imperfections and diversity.**
- \* Apology and forgiveness, or joint acts of mourning, confession or purification.**
- \* Acknowledgement of interdependence and the re- establishment of sufficient trust for the different groups to risk getting on with the day to day job of living together.**

**This collection of ideas comes from a variety of sources and cultural viewpoints. It can simply provide a starting point for discussion in the light of the experiences and viewpoints of others.**

I notice that the modesty of those closing lines is different from the tone of the opening paragraphs. This difference reflects the conflict between the attitude of diffidence I want to maintain and my underlying zeal for certain viewpoints and values. I regularly use disclaimers like this to overcome the difficulty!

The question of values is the final topic in this review of workshop content. Values are implicit in everything that is said and done in a workshop, and it is sometimes useful - and respectful - to make them explicit, and to wrestle with the dilemmas they pose. Sometimes I ask participants what conflict outcomes they see as desirable: what they want to be left with when it is over. This would seem a practical way in to the discussion, but can in practice be a hard question to grasp (or explain). An apparently more abstract form, which in practice seems easier for participants to enter into (presumably because the form is so strong) is John Paul Lederach's allegorical exercise (1995). It is based on verse 10 of Psalm 85:

'Truth and mercy have met together, peace and justice have kissed.'

Participants are asked to choose the value they think most important in conflict, and gather in corresponding groups. They discuss together why this value is of paramount importance to them and choose a representative to speak in the person of that value:

'I am Truth (Mercy etc.). In the midst of conflict I am of the greatest importance because ..... I feel closest to (Justice etc.) because ..... I feel most threatened by (Peace etc.) because..... '

Each representative speaks and is questioned by the listeners from the other groups. Members of their own group may speak in their support. The discussion gradually broadens and becomes less formal, as the relationships of support and tension between the different values emerge. Through the exploration of their relationships to each other, the meanings of the values themselves are clarified.

I said the exercise was borrowed from John Paul Lederach, and gave the reference; but what appears above is my version of what I learned not from his book, but through working with a colleague who had worked with John Paul. I would not take an exercise out of a book and use it myself, unless I had seen or experienced it in action - just as I see any written materials as secondary in training.

## **Approach to the selection of workshop content and to the use of manuals and resource packs**

I have indicated, in some detail, the major content elements of the work I do with groups. On occasions where the agenda is not pre-planned, these elements provide a range of resources, tools and processes to draw on as needed. I know that any selection of ideas and exercises will be personal, even if the criteria on which it is based seem to make sense and would be recognised by others. I also know that what works for one trainer will not work for another. I refer above to my role in the compilation of one organisation's resource pack for trainers and others. The editor who did the final work made a good job of a very difficult task, and drew on the personal perspectives of a good many people. Although I personally cannot take ideas out of manuals or resource packs, I recognise that others find them useful, if only as a reminder of what they have already experienced. The following was the introduction I wrote for what was originally planned as a small manual, before the editor had been found and the project enlarged. These paragraphs summarise much of my thinking about workshop planning and facilitation, outlining some considerations which I find important. I think they show that although I have an established body of models and exercises which I find helpful, I do not wish to suggest that they are somehow *the ones* to use.

**The materials this manual contains have been tried and tested in different continents; nonetheless they come from the repertoires of particular trainers and represent only a tiny fraction of what must be available across the world. They are intended to offer what may be a possible starting place for some, to develop, adapt and add to with experience; for others, an additional resource for work already established. It is our hope that the manual itself will grow and change, as new insights and resources become available to us. The usefulness of any given item will depend on context: questions of culture, the nature and purpose of the event being planned, the particular participants and the composition of the group, the style and abilities of the facilitator.**

The needs and possibilities of different workshops will vary according to the participants and their backgrounds and circumstances: Who are they? What are the challenges they are facing? What is their level of experience, in training and in action? Do they already know each other? Will they be working together in the future? Are they seeking an opportunity to build some general skills and understanding, or to focus on a particular task or problem? Do the participants come from conflicting groups?

If the group is a pre-existing one it can be expected to have common needs and priorities, which the trainer can discover beforehand, or at least at the beginning of the workshop. Is there a particular conflict, or part of a conflict, in which they are involved or wish to play a role? What are their possibilities and choices? Do they mean to be active as partisans or as non-partisans? What stage has the conflict reached? If it is at an early stage, or is still latent, should the attempt be to prevent it or engage in it? Or is it in full swing, or ready for resolution? Or is it time for healing and social reconstruction after some kind of settlement? The answers to these questions will determine whether the main focus should be on, for instance, group building and campaigning skills; or on bridge building and problem solving, and the skills of negotiation and mediation; or on dealing with the after-effects of trauma and processes for reconciliation, and co-operation for the future.

If the group is not a pre-existing one, but will be brought together by invitation, those who plan the workshop should have a good understanding of the general context and needs of the locality or region, and the kind of people for whom the workshop is intended. A clear description of the character and purposes of the workshop should be given to potential participants. It will be important for the workshop leaders to have as much information as possible, in advance, about the composition of the group and the participants' background, experience and needs, as far as they can be identified; but in any circumstances a trainer should be ready to adjust the agenda during the process of the workshop, since the group will have its own emerging needs and dynamics.

Of course, workshops vary in length, usually more according to what is possible than what is ideal. It is often hard to decide how best to use the time available - including how to balance work and rest. The kind of information we have outlined above will

help in the setting of priorities. The venue chosen or available will also have an effect on what can be done and how. For instance, temperature and other matters relating to physical comfort need to be borne in mind when the length of sessions is being decided, and the number of small groups that participants can be divided into may be determined to some extent by the number of rooms available.

It is usually highly desirable to have more than one trainer/facilitator for any workshop, to share the work and responsibility, give each other support and feedback, and complement each other's skills. They will need to know each to be sure that they can work effectively together, and to have planned or at least considered the agenda together.

Agendas can be designed to maximise participation, to draw on and help shape the learnings from participants' own experience, offering frameworks, ideas and information, as well as opportunities for practice, experiment and reflection. They can also be designed to provide variety, in terms of the size of group worked in (plenaries, pairs, small groups), as well as the type of activity and energy required, in order to keep participants engaged at every level.

(I did not explain here the use of games. Although I do not use them in all my workshops, they can play an important role in group-building and in keeping participants awake and engaged - as well as just being fun. For a discussion of their use, see the account of the Geneva workshop presented in Chapter Six.)

### **A sample agenda**

The following workshop agenda (used in Harare) appeared in the Resource Pack IA eventually produced. It illustrates in a nuts-and-bolts way how the content elements outlined above may be brought together, and some of the processes I use. The uncertainty of style and mix of syntactical forms indicates, I think, my own uncertainty and discomfort about the whole exercise of trying to fix on paper, as a kind of a pattern, something which, in my experience, cannot and should not be fixed in advance - only described afterwards. Re-reading it now, I am almost overwhelmed by a

kind of disgust with what seems now the prescriptive impression given by setting out an agenda in this way. (The use of the word 'leader' is particularly disturbing. It crept in from another version of the agenda which I prepared for another organisation, which for some reason preferred the term.) I had felt the same unease at the time I prepared it for publication, but was persuaded by others that it could be useful, and made my peace with myself by prefacing it as follows:

**The following sample agenda is based on the experience of one workshop lasting six days. The original agenda, now slightly modified, was planned with a particular group in mind - in this case not a pre-existing group, but one drawn together for the week. The participants were all women and trainers, from different parts of Africa, and the purpose of this workshop was to provide an introduction to some of the ideas and approaches of conflict resolution which, together with their own training skills, would enable them to run their own conflict resolution training workshops, or to incorporate some elements of conflict resolution training into their other training work.**

**This agenda outline may provide a useful source of ideas - even, in some cases maybe, a model to start from - for those planning similar events. It should not, however, be regarded as a blueprint, as the way of doing things, and it is certainly far from exhaustive in content, even for a general and introductory workshop. With all those qualifications, we hope it will be of use.**

I then continued:

**Here is the agenda itself. Times, of course, could be different, and in any case never work out as planned; but estimating them gives a point of departure and acts as a feasibility check for what can be reasonably included.**

**(Note: Although there is likely to be more than one facilitator, I have used the word in the singular in most places, to refer to the one operating in a given moment.)'**

I considered whether or not I should reproduce the agenda here as it appears in the manual, with all the times, including breaks, marked. Although it takes a lot of space like this, it gives a feel of the rhythm of the workshop; so I have decided to leave it intact. (Timing and rhythm are important for

facilitators, and I wanted this sample agenda to be useful. Timing comments and suggestions appear in the text from time to time.)

## **AGENDA FOR A ONE WEEK CONFLICT RESOLUTION WORKSHOP**

### **First evening:**

**7.00pm**

**Welcome and opening remarks.**

**7.20pm**

**Participants meet in pairs, with someone they do not already know, taking it in turns to tell their partner about themselves for three minutes. Participants then return to the big circle and introduce their partners to the whole group. (They will be given not more than two minutes each to do this, since the intention is not to try to repeat everything from the paired introduction.)**

**8.10pm**

**Break**

**8.30pm**

**Participants meet in threes for ten minutes and, dividing the time between them, take it in turns to share their hopes and fears for the coming week. When the participants return to the whole group, the facilitator collects these hopes and fears on a big sheet of paper and responds as appropriate. (What is important is that people's feelings and expectations have been articulated, which will help them to relax, and that the workshop facilitator has been made aware of them. If there are any wholly unrealistic hopes, or unfounded fears, they need to be dispelled.)**

**9.00pm**

**The facilitator outlines the week's agenda (see overview above of workshop content and agenda), first setting out the assumptions on which this workshop will be based: that the spiritual, emotional, intellectual and practical aspects of the group's deliberations and experiences will be woven together, since they are inextricably linked;**

**that the group will become a community of learning, using participatory methods, drawing on the experience and wisdom of each person, and working in an informal and relaxed atmosphere;**

**that analysis and imagination are both important, and that laughter and gravity are complementary;**

that the agenda which has been prepared is intended as a framework for the development of understanding, skills, resources and commitment, and that it can be changed as the workshop goes along;

that the group's own experience of working together will provide important material for learning, and, when it seems particularly relevant or necessary (for instance, if there is a conflict), what is happening in the group may, for a while, become the focus of its work.

that in all discussion, evaluation and feedback, training processes and issues will be included, as well as 'content' (including feedback on the helpfulness and cultural appropriateness of written materials).

[Most if these are regular assumptions of mine, if not always made explicit. (I would not, I now realise, include anything about laughter and imagination, in explicit assumptions for a mixed workshop). Some, like the last one, are specific to the Harare workshop, and really more in the nature of expressions of intention or promises than assumptions. Their presentation at the beginning of the Harare workshop was an opportunity to make explicit things which might otherwise have been unclear or have been overlooked, or remained as unvoiced questions. Re-reading these assumptions now, I am aware (not for the first time, but more sharply than before) that they make no mention of teaching as such. The question of what role I should and/or do play in this regard is one thread in my reflections. Respecting the existing knowledge of participants is one thing: disregarding my own is another. Dissembling, pretending to work only elicitively, while in practice giving an important place to my own input, would be something else again. I hope that is not what I have been doing. At all events, my behaviour as a trainer comes under close scrutiny and is the subject of much reflection in coming pages.]

This presentation is followed by questions and discussion.

**9.45pm**

Explanation about base groups to be formed next day for support, evaluation, feedback and ideas (also, if appropriate, one day's responsibility for opening and closure, room tidying, time-keeping, games etc.)

**9.50pm**

Closure.

**First morning:**

**9.00am**

Opening (eg with a song or game), announcements and agenda review.

**9.15am**

After noting the importance of groups in social movements for change and within the workshop itself, the facilitator asks participants the question, 'What behaviours have you noticed in groups you have belonged to, or meetings you have attended, that have been helpful or made things difficult?' Participants' responses are written on



large paper under the two headings, 'helpful' and 'unhelpful'. What other things could a group need to be effective? These lists are then discussed and those agreed to be important used as the basis for a set of 'ground rules' or working agreements for the rest of the workshop to which all participants can commit themselves. It is explained that such agreements provide a basis for trust, assuring participants that their needs will be met and making it clear what they can contribute to the effective working and learning of the group. Elements of such a working contract are likely to include respect for agreements on time and procedures, respect for all participants and their contributions, even when there is disagreement, speaking one at a time, and not to taking an undue share of the time available, and honouring requests for confidentiality.

(The sheet [a handout included in the manual] on 'Groups and what they need to do their work well' could be given out at this point.)

**9.45am**

Formation of base groups (with a geographical mix, but the possibility of managing without external help for translation).

(I do not explain the purpose of these base groups at this point in the text, but they are important both for providing a small, mixed group for getting to know others and for belonging, when participants are new to each other and away from home. They also provide for an excellent form of evaluation, as will be seen at the end of the day.)

**10.00am**

The facilitator asks participants for words which spring to mind when they think of conflict, writing them on large paper. Are all these words negative? In the subsequent discussion conflict is recognised as an inevitable part of life, particularly in relation to difference and change, with positive and negative potential, according to how it is approached and handled.

Participants are asked what they see as desirable outcomes of conflict. These are seen to include both practical matters and relationships. The relative importance of these two elements will vary with the context: for instance, in a family one may put up with a good deal in order not to risk harming a relationship, while in a political context material issues may take precedence.

**10.15am**

The facilitator asks what are the things which help or hinder in a conflict, and writes up participants' suggestions under those two headings.

Input by facilitator (which is likely to confirm participants' own suggestions and ideas) about respect - for oneself, for others and for life itself - as the fundamental value at the heart of nonviolence and all work for human rights, democracy and peace. The building of healthy relationships and the solving of problems can happen only on the basis of the affirmation or recognition of the intrinsic value of all concerned. (Here the iceberg diagram is drawn and the words filled in on the bottom layer and tip.)

As the list of helps and hindrances will have suggested, the most vital expression and promoter of respect is good communication (the second layer of the iceberg). The healing power of attentive and respectful listening is hard to overestimate. (See sheet on 'Communication and conflict'.)

**10.30am**

**Break.**

**11.00am**

**Introduction to listening exercises.**

**11.05am**

**Not listening:**

**In pairs, participants take it in turns to speak about something of importance in their lives, for instance, 'My family', or 'An important event in my childhood', or 'A conflict which has affected my life'. The one who is not speaking but being spoken to makes it clear in every way possible that they are not listening. The speaker tries to keep going for two minutes; then the roles are reversed and the 'listener' becomes the speaker. Afterwards there is quick reporting back to the whole group about what it was like not to be listened to, and what made it clear that the 'listeners' were not listening (and therefore, by implication, the signs of attentive listening).**

**11.10am**

**Silent listening:**

**In the same pairs and on the same subject, the speakers talk for three minutes, the listeners giving their whole attention, listening silently, then reflecting back what they have heard (two minutes). The speakers have one minute to make any corrections or additions to the listeners' account; then the roles are reversed. All return to the whole group and discuss how this second exercise felt.**

**11.30am**

**Listening for 'facts' and feelings:**

**In new groups, this time of three, the participants choose one speaker and two listeners: one to listen for the 'facts' of the account and one to track the feelings they observe in the speaker as the account progresses. The subject for the speaker is 'An important thing that happened to me when I was at school' (for instance). The speaker has up to five (or three\*) minutes to talk, then the listener for 'facts' has three (or two) minutes to reflect back what she heard and the speaker a minute or two to say how accurate this was. The listener for feelings then gives her account, again with three minutes (or two) to do so, and with a further one or two minutes for the speaker to respond.**

**(\* use the shorter times if running late.)**

**11.50am**

**The whole group reconvenes to discuss the exercise and what has been learned from it.**

**12.00 noon**

**In the whole group, participants consider ways in which a listener can respond or intervene verbally, both helpfully and unhelpfully. The facilitator collects ideas from participants and writes them up under the two headings. (The 'Communication and conflict' sheet can be referred to as appropriate, and cultural issues discussed.)**

**12.30 lunch.**

**First afternoon:**

**2.30pm**

**Assertive speaking:**

**Input:** When things happen that we do not like, we can remain silent, acquiescent, passive, or even say appeasing things which deny the pain or anger that we feel; we can be aggressive, attacking with our words; or we can stand up for ourselves (or someone else) respectfully - be assertive. We probably all do different things in different situations. What do we do when we are assertive? Ideas are written up. (See sheet again as appropriate.)

**2.50pm**

**Assertiveness exercise:**

In pairs, participants tell their partner of an incident in which they either appeased or were passive, or were aggressive, asking their partner to play the role of the other in that situation so that they can re-live the moment and see if they can respond assertively this time. After this brief re-enactment and a short discussion of how it went (ten minutes altogether), the tasks are reversed, and the other has the chance to describe and re-enact an episode from her experience, and to discuss her efforts and receive her partner's feedback. This is followed by brief discussion in the whole group. The 'Communication and conflict' sheet is distributed.

**3.20pm**

**Game.**

**3.25pm**

The facilitator introduces (if it seems useful/appropriate to the group) the conflict styles sheet as an aid to self-awareness and choice.

**3.35pm**

**Obstacles to constructive communication:**

A diagram is drawn on the flipchart of a speaking head and a hearing head and the line of communication between them. The group is asked to suggest some of the things that will affect, in the first place, what words emerge from the speaker (such as preconceptions, state of health, size of vocabulary) and, in the second place, the way the hearer receives those words. Participants' ideas are written across the respective heads. Then they are asked what factors in the circumstances or context of the conversation will also have an impact (for instance, privacy or the opposite, noise levels, other activities), and these ideas are written in the space between the heads. From this exercise it will be seen that communication is a complicated matter, and that allowances have to be made accordingly.

**4.00pm**

**Break.**

**4.30pm**

**Questions of identity and prejudice:**

Participants are invited to look at the question of identity and belonging. Each is asked to make a list of as many groups as she can think of to which she belongs or which help to form her identity; then to select the three which she considers most important and to write by each of the three something about it that makes her feel proud, and something about it that makes her feel uncomfortable or ashamed.

**4.45pm**

Participants are then asked to share these lists with one or two others (and if there is time go on to tell each other about occasions when they have been, on the one hand, victims of prejudice or discrimination and, on the other hand, guilty of them).

**5.05pm**

Individuals share with the whole group anything that they choose to, discussing, as appropriate, questions of difference, justice, and the need both for critical awareness, and respect and sensitivity, in relation to our own cultures and those of others.

**5.30pm**

Brief evaluation in whole group and closure, followed by base group meetings. (These could also take place immediately after supper.)

**8.00pm**

(Or as soon as convenient after supper) Base group representatives for the day meet with the workshop leaders to give feedback and ideas.

**Second morning:**

**9.00am**

Opening, announcements, report on base group feedback and agenda review.

**9.15am**

**Dealing with strong emotions:**

Coping with anger is a difficult and important element in responding constructively to conflict, whether as a direct participant or as a mediator. Participants are asked to remember an occasion when they were faced with an angry situation and to take up a position at some point on an imaginary line across the room, one end of which represents total satisfaction with the way they responded, the other total dissatisfaction. They are then invited to explain why they are standing where they are: what was it about their response that seemed helpful or less so?

**10.00am**

In pairs, participants discuss their own difficulties with, and resources for, coping with strong emotions, in themselves and others (15 minutes), then bring any points they choose to the whole group.

**10.30am**

**Break.**

**11.00am**

After a brief discussion on the dynamics and stages of conflict (see sheet), the leader fills in and explains the third layer of the 'ice-berg': the phase of co-operation between the parties in the search for a solution to the conflict; one which will include - meet the basic needs of - both or all parties.

The concept of reframing is explained (see sheet), along with the importance both of clear analysis of the conflict, and of imaginative thinking to generate options for resolving it; also of care in the evaluation and implementation of any agreement

(including subsequent monitoring - see later sheet on mediation). This explanation is followed by questions and discussion.

**11.30am**  
**Game.**

**11.35am**  
**Analysing conflict :**  
**Input (see sheet), including the idea of 'needs and fears' analysis. Discussion.**  
**Participants then work in groups of six or so to use this method to analyse a conflict with which one of its members is familiar. The member concerned outlines the conflict, with the help of questions from the others, and the reporter 'maps' it on large paper for presentation to the whole group.**

**12.30pm**  
**Lunch.**

**2.30pm**  
**Groups finalise work; presentations and questions; comments on the process.**

**3.30pm**  
**Game.**

**3.40pm**  
**Third party roles in conflict:**  
**The facilitator collects on large paper words that describe the different roles that third parties can play, under two headings: positive and negative. These lists are then discussed.**

**4.00pm**  
**Break.**

**4.30pm**  
**Mediation is briefly explained as one of the positive functions open to a third party who opts for a non-partisan role (rather than, for instance, one of advocacy for one side). Discussion follows on mediation in its different forms, based on participants' own experience and knowledge.**

**4.50pm**  
**The leader asks, on the basis of this explanation of mediation, what are the functions of a mediator and the qualities she or he will require? The responses are listed on the flipchart and discussed. The sheet on mediation is given out.**

**5.10pm**  
**Discussion on the possible relevance of mediation to the cases used for needs and fears mapping.**

**5.30pm**  
**Brief evaluation and closure, followed by base group meetings.**

**8.00pm**  
**Base group representatives meet with workshop leaders.**

**Third morning:**

**9.00am**

**Opening, announcements, report on base group feedback and agenda review.**

**9.15am**

**Preparation of mediation role-play: several (if the leader feels the groups will be able to manage them without her/his help) based on the cases used for 'needs and fears' analysis and done in the same groups. If the leader's facilitation is going to be needed, one 'fishbowl' role play can be done instead, with a chosen scenario and a few volunteer participants, and the rest of the group observing. In either case those chosen as mediators facilitate a face to face meeting of the conflicting parties, with the aim of co-operative problem solving. The setting and form of the meeting should be discussed with participants, and cultural considerations taken into account. (The observer or facilitator/observer role is important in itself. See sheet for instructions.)**

**9.35am**

**Let the role-play run for twenty to thirty minutes, then stop, whatever stage the mediation has reached. Participants de-role and all go through the process of feedback and discussion.**

**10.30am**

**Break.**

**11.00am**

**Injustice and oppression, made possible by extreme inequalities of power, have to be addressed if conflict is to be resolved. The leader presents and explains the model, 'Power and conflict resolution' (see sheets) and this presentation is followed by discussion.**

**11.30am**

**Oppression is a form of violence and can be combated violently or nonviolently. In small groups participants discuss experiences of violence : their own violence, the violence they suffer in their own relationships and at different levels in their society. What forms does it take? How are these different forms connected? The ideas which emerge are written or drawn on large sheets of paper, for instance in the form of a web. (This will encourage the group to appoint a facilitator and a scribe.)**

**12.15/30 pm**

**Presentations of work groups' work.**

**(Note: If time runs out, this discussion of different forms of violence can be done in plenary at the beginning of the next session.)**

**12.45/1.00pm**

**Lunch.**

**Afternoon free.**

**(Possibly an optional evening session for small group mediation role-plays.)**

**Fourth morning:**

**9.00am**

**Opening, announcements, report on base group feedback and agenda review.**

**9.15am**

**The facilitator offers a definition of violence as destructive action which oppresses, exploits, diminishes or harms another or others, whether physically or psychologically, by personal, social, political or economic means, noting that power is in itself neither positive nor negative, but that violence is negative by definition.**

**The facilitator continues with brief input on options for responding to violence. The impulse to react violence is a healthy one: to remain passive (or appeasing) in the face of violence is to allow its perpetuation; to be aggressive or respond with counter-violence is to enter into the violent dynamic; to respond assertively, without violence, is to stand up against it while introducing a different dynamic. This third option can be described as active nonviolence.**

**Presentation on the philosophy of nonviolence. (See sheet.)**

**Note: This presentation is intended to *describe* an approach, not to prescribe it.**

**Discussion.**

**10.00am**

**In groups of five or six, participants share insights and sources of inspiration for nonviolence - own experiences and beliefs, people, relationships, reading etc. - and problems, obstacles, questions that come up.**

**10.45am**

**Break.**

**11.15am**

**Important ideas and insights from the groupwork are shared in the whole group.**

**11.40am**

**Song or game.**

**11.45am**

**Presentation of models for the analysis of unjust/ oppressive/ damaging situations, for building support, and for planning and building an alternative future. (See sheets.)**

**Discussion. (Note that these models can be used in the planning of any concerted action for change, and at whatever stage of a conflict. For instance, they could be used in a campaign to create the political will to end a conflict.)**

**12.30am**

**Lunch.**

**Fourth afternoon:**

**2.30pm**

**Formation of groups which choose a situation known to one or more of their participants and analyse it, using the models.**

**3.30pm**  
**Presentations of groups' work.**

**4.00pm**  
**Break**

**4.30pm**  
**The leader introduces a discussion on methods of nonviolent action, inviting participants' stories and discussion. Some categories and guiding ideas will emerge and can be summarised. (See sheet.)**

**5.30pm**  
**Brief evaluation and closure, followed by base group meetings.**

**8.00pm**  
**Base group representatives meet with workshop leaders.**

**Fifth morning:**

**9.00am**  
**Opening, announcements, report on base group feedback, agenda review.**

**9.15am**  
**Recap on methods of nonviolent action.**  
**Groups continue to work on yesterday's cases, making a plan of action for the first three months of a campaign, and planning one action in some detail.**

**10.30am**  
**Break.**

**11.15am**  
**The groups prepare a role-play, focusing on a brief episode contained within their action plan, to test ways of handling some particular challenge they envisage and the usefulness of concepts/skills covered in the workshop thus far. The role-play runs for only a few minutes (see sheet for instructions), so that there is time for thorough feedback.**

**12.15pm**  
**Reports in plenary of the groups' plans and role plays and the learnings from them.**

**(Note: The use of the above half session for role-plays will depend on how time has gone up to this point. In training for trainers, this time might alternatively be used to focus on training issues.)**

**12.45pm**  
**Lunch.**

**Fifth afternoon:**

**2.30pm**



**Recovery, healing, forgiveness, reconciliation:**

**In small groups, participants share experiences: what has been needed, what has made it possible, or impossible, for them or those they have known (both individuals and groups) to let go of pain and anger and move on? What are the similarities and differences and differences between the needs and responsibilities at the individual and at the group level?**

**The groups make pictures or diagrams on large paper to represent possible routes to healing and reconciliation.**

**4.00pm**

**Break.**

**4.30pm**

**Presentation of groupwork, followed by plenary discussion of what is needed for healing to take place, particularly at the social and political levels.**

**6.00pm**

**Brief evaluation of the day and closure.**

**7.30pm**

**Supper and party.**

**Final morning:**

**9.00am**

**Opening, announcements and agenda review.**

**9.15am**

**In threes or fours (or in base groups) participants discuss how they evaluate the workshop overall and its relevance for their lives and work; also how they will begin to use what they have learned and what future support would be valuable.**

**10.00am**

**Collecting and discussing ideas in plenary.**

**10.45am.**

**Formal thanks and a chance for all participants to thank each other personally, followed by some final song or exercise or symbolic closing.**

**Each participant has the chance to speak very briefly about what she has learned, how she has changed, what the week has meant to her. This may be combined with some kind of symbolic exercise.**

**11.30am**

**Workshop ends.**

**Note: This final session can be extended or contracted according to the time available. The crucial components are overall evaluation, connecting the week to plans for the future and to life and work back home, together with psychological closure and leave-taking.'**

To this agenda I added the following notes:

**'One alternative ordering of these agenda elements is to begin with the 'Power and conflict resolution' model, using it as the framework for the week, and working from the topic of groups and what they need to make them work (tied in with the group formation stage on the model), through questions of violence and nonviolence, and analysis and action strategies, to the section generally understood as 'conflict resolution' (using the 'iceberg' model by way of introduction, and incorporating communication skills) and finally to recovery and healing.**

**If a group's most urgent preoccupation is with questions of power and justice, the order just described makes a lot of sense, because it begins where they are. If there are likely to be tensions between different groupings among the participants, for instance along ethnic lines, it could be important to take questions of identity and stereotypes relatively early on, and to consider which topics and processes will help build trust in the group. [Here I spoke with my experience of the Balaton workshop in mind: see account later.] If participants were all concerned with one overall situation which had by and large reached the 'recovery' stage, that could be a reason for starting at the end of the conflict resolution stage in the 'Power and conflict resolution' model, and allocating more time to this post-conflict phase. In other words, the arrangement of the different elements in such a workshop should be shaped according to the estimated needs of a particular group, and modified as the workshop progresses.'**

### **Agenda ordering**

Finding the right ordering for a particular workshop seems important to me. I want to start from the point of most immediate concern; but in a geographically mixed group, there may be no one such point, and the choice is therefore somewhat arbitrary. In such cases, I try to sense whether the overall emphasis is on 'conflict resolution' or 'nonviolent action' and choose my starting point accordingly. I would like to have more opportunities to focus on particular aspects of this overall menu. For instance, I have never had time to give what felt like adequate attention to the question

of post-conflict recovery. Recently I have begun to work in Croatia, helping those working in fragmented societies to tackle some of the problems associated with refugee return. I find, however, that a situation which is, at the macro level 'post-conflict' is, at the micro-level, often at the stage of entering into conflict; so that even here the training menu needs to include a wide range of topics and skills.

## **Evaluation**

I shall return to the question of overall usefulness of training workshops in my concluding chapters, when I look at the question of evaluation. At this point, however, I would like to focus, briefly, on specific forms of workshop evaluation and on the need throughout workshops, and at the end, to ensure that participants have the opportunity and encouragement to evaluate their learnings in relation to their own experiences, lives and circumstances. This is important to the trainers and organisers, so that they can try to adjust and develop their work in response to what is really needed or useful. It is also important for participants. It is a way for them to maximise the usefulness of what they experience in a workshop, identifying what makes sense to them, what is enabling. It also helps them to develop their skills for evaluating and giving feedback (skills which are practised also in relation to exercises such as role-plays).

In the early phase of my research I used largely plenary evaluation processes during workshops: some simple process at the end of each day, like inviting comments to be written up under the general categories of 'positive', 'negative', and 'ideas for the future'. While it had the advantages of spontaneity, simplicity, and involving (theoretically) the whole group, in practice this process tended to involve some more than others, and to leave the facilitator(s) often with multiple and contradictory demands in an undigested form. I therefore began to use, more often, the 'base-group' system mentioned above, whereby all participants were drawn in to small group discussion, and invited to contribute to a more considered summary, which was then presented to the facilitators by one group member (or two). This exercise seems to enable participants to produce very serious and useful evaluative feedback. It also provides practice in group process, including finding consensus

and acknowledging differences of opinion. It gives an opportunity for practice in representation and the use of feedback skills, since even facilitators need to be affirmed as well as shown how they can do better! It gives the facilitators more consolidated feedback than they would get in a quick plenary session, and a summary of all the group feedback can be presented to the next morning's plenary, along with the facilitators' proposals for responding to it. (See Geneva account in Chapter Six.)

This same system can provide the basis for a final evaluation within the workshop, with the base-group meetings followed by an extended plenary session. In addition, individual written evaluations give an opportunity for participants to reflect at leisure, and free from social pressure. (See, for instance, Harare account in Chapter Eight.)

This review of workshop evaluation procedures brings me to the end of this chapter. I hope that I have given the reader an adequate idea of the nature of the workshops I facilitate: the concepts and processes they embrace, and the approach - both to education and to conflict - which informs them.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### WORKSHOP ACCOUNTS: EXPLANATION AND EARLY WORKSHOPS

#### **Part 1. Explanation of the coming chapters**

From the Spring of 1994 until the Spring of 1996, I kept detailed records and reflections in my journal during workshops I facilitated. My aim in journaling was, as I explain in the introduction to my account of the Harare workshop (Chapter Eight), 'to have a record to examine and interpret, rather than to illustrate or prove some theory or viewpoint'. That is not to claim objectivity but to say that I aimed to be open to what was happening and being said, and aware of my own behaviour and responses. When the workshop in question was over, I produced an account, written as soon as possible after the event, and based on those detailed journal records, and with an additional layer of commentary and reflection. I also kept more general reflective notes in my journal, and occasionally written more consolidated reflective pieces. The ideas generated and recorded in this way were absorbed into subsequent thinking and writing.

The written accounts and reflections chronicling my work and thinking as a 'conflict resolution trainer' working across cultures, constitute together a record of my research process and provide the data for its conclusions. They tell the story of my action and reflection, describing the challenges I experienced as a facilitator of particular processes with particular purposes, and the ways I thought about and dealt with those challenges. They provide evidence of the place of respect in this work, and suggest some of its many meanings. At every stage along the way, my records, oral and written, have been submitted to my supervisor and research colleagues for scrutiny and challenge, so that I have been helped to avoid, or to reassess, easy assumptions and inadequately based conclusions. The discipline of constant record-keeping, and of reflecting both on my own and with others, and the re-reflecting involved in writing the accounts, was a key process in my inquiry and my development as a researcher.

The workshops I have recorded took place in a wide variety of places and brought together participants from many areas of conflict. More often than not the group was in itself multi-cultural. In some cases the facilitation team was culturally mixed; usually the facilitators were from a cultural background, or backgrounds, different from those of some or all of the participants. After two years of intensive record-keeping and written reflection, and a major review of my research up to that point, I decided I had enough full workshop accounts, and that from then on I would write more selectively. I would go into workshops with my by now habitual questions and existing experience in mind, being open to and noting things that added some new perspective or insight, or that filled out and corroborated information I had on some issue, or that raised an issue I had so far missed. I have facilitated many workshops in this second two year phase (Spring 1996 - Spring 1998), and have drawn on the additional experience and insights they provided, both in my commentary on the accounts presented in these chapters, and in my concluding chapters. In one case, I have included journal extracts from later workshops at the end of an earlier account, since they are so closely related to it.

I have given a good deal of thought to the question of how to order these workshop accounts and other pieces: whether to try to organise them according to salient themes, or types of workshop, or geographical location. But the themes which have emerged from each workshop have always been multiple, assuming different forms and combinations in each case, and not to be understood without their context. I have had to weigh the advantages of analysis, and the thematic clarity it can bring, against the vital, integrated complexity of stories. Morris Berman says of Gregory Bateson that he 'instinctively knew that most knowledge was analogue, that realities lay in wholes rather than parts, and that immersion ... rather than analytical dissection was the beginning of wisdom' (Berman 1982: 234). And Judi Marshall describes the feeling of dissatisfaction engendered by dismembering interviews to arrange things under different headings: a sense that this '*robs* the individual case of its wholeness' (Marshall 1981: 396). In the end I have decided to allow my accounts to tell their story, keeping, by and large, the chronological sequence of my writing, and using all the accounts of my work up to and including January 1996. I have made one or two changes in their order, to bring together workshops of similar types, but I have been able to do this without much disruption to the overall sequence and the developmental thread of my inquiry. Many themes emerged from

these accounts in the process of their writing and in subsequent reflection and conversation. They will be noted in my ongoing commentary and are often taken up in subsequent cycles of inquiry and accounting. I will reflect upon them further in Chapter Nine and in my conclusions.

I begin with two workshops which took place in the first few months of my research. They are workshops of contrasting character: a contrast which will be a matter for later discussion in relation to evaluation of the kind of training support work that I am engaged in. The next chapter is headed 'Intercontinental Workshops'. It includes an account of a workshop organised by an international church body and held in Geneva for participants from many different countries and several continents. The second account in Chapter Six is of a gathering of trainers, rather than a training workshop. The trainers came from Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, the USA, and Europe. 'Working With Specific Conflicts', is the title of Chapter Seven, which includes accounts of workshops held in Lebanon and with groups from what was Yugoslavia. The last of these 'accounts' chapters (Chapter Eight) is about 'Multi-Regional/ Continental Workshops', and describes work done with African women trainers from across English and French speaking Africa, and with CR practitioners from different parts of the Former Soviet Union and what used to be known as Eastern Europe.

I hope that through this ordering and framing of my accounts I shall be able to tell my story with some clarity, revealing the unfolding process that I have lived, and showing how the glimmerings of at least some bits of answers began to emerge - raising new questions and posing new problems; revealing also the evolution of my sense of my self in the midst of all this, and my approach to my own practice. I have tried to hang onto and develop the four threads of my inquiry: the meaning and significance of respect; the fitness for purpose of my theory; my respect as a facilitator in these different circumstances, and the inquiry process itself: my learning journey.

I shall be naming particular questions and themes as I go: they are embedded in the text of my accounts, and indicated in their framing. But I hope too that the reader will enter into the accounts and engage with their meaning in her/ his own way. After the chapters in which my workshops are

described and reflected on, I shall draw together my emerging ideas and reflections on different themes and issues.

I shall reproduce the accounts for the most part in their entirety, with minor editing. Where I do some pruning, or use linked extracts or summaries, I do so not because I wish to remove material I find uncomfortable or counter-evidential, but in order to avoid undue repetition and reduce the overall volume of my material, while retaining what seems to be of real significance. I feel - and hope that the reader will feel - that the different pieces of writing brought together in this section, while varied in length and content, do have a certain coherence, from the simple fact of emerging from a particular phase of one working life and attention; a phase in which the habit of written recording of action and thinking became a central aspect.

The writing collected in these chapters is uneven in style and quality. My accounts begin uncertainly, and as I got into the recording process, it seems as if I became almost compulsive about it, not wanting to miss out anything, determined to tell the whole story, so that what I wrote is perhaps over-detailed and undigestable, or at any rate undigested. As I went on, I became, it seems, more relaxed, and at the same time more focused. I had a growing sense of what the issues were for me, and became more trusting of my own feelings as to what mattered. I think my writing becomes correspondingly less laboured, freer - though the events and questions I reflect on are certainly no less complex.

I am aware that these observations on my writing are based more on feedback from my supervisor and research colleagues than on my own spontaneous discernment; and because I wished the nature of my accounts to reflect my developmental journey, I have left them unaltered in character, with only minor editing or expansion for the sake of clarification. (New perspectives and other voices find their place in the commentary.) One of the difficulties for me as an action researcher has been to keep - or find - any distance from what I have written - even some time later. My workshop accounts tend to draw me back into the events and feelings they describe, and whereas I find it relatively easy to reconsider the interpretations and reflections my writing contains, assessing the quality of the writing itself is largely beyond me. (One exception to that, however, is what I am able



to notice, increasingly, about my style: that it is often over-complicated, like my thinking - trying to include too many possible angles and provisions, and therefore too many clauses! Over-complication is maybe a reason for the way some of my accounts weave about. I have introduced subheadings into some of them where I felt they helped to track the threads of this weaving.)

I have, in the course of my accounts, written not only about my own behaviour and thought, but about the behaviour and words of participants and colleagues. For the reasons given in the explanation of my methodology, I have done so without their permission (though not always without their knowledge). I hope I have not often done so without respect. However, I have felt it appropriate to disguise their identity by changing the names of people, and describing the organisations concerned, rather than naming them.

## **Part 2. Early workshops: purposes and questions**

The two workshops which will be presented here, through extracts from the relevant accounts, took place in the first few months of my research. They were very different from each other in nature. The second was of a kind not represented elsewhere in my accounts, but of which I have had further recent experience, and which I consider useful and important.

### **ROSTOV**

The first major piece of work I undertook after joining the CARPP group was a two week training seminar organised by a London based organisation working for the 'prevention, mitigation and resolution' of violent conflict. This workshop was held in April 1994, in Rostov, at the edge of the North Caucasus region of the Former Soviet Union: a region riven with conflict. I went with the organisation's training officer (here named Ruud), its regional officer (David), and a co-facilitator (Jo). I had decided in advance to focus on the question of openness in facilitation, and my account begins by describing the feedback I received on my openness in team planning sessions, and the

balance I achieved between receptiveness to the ideas and opinions of others and readiness to make my own input.

My account was, as I wrote in my introduction to it, 'a condensed, ordered and, where necessary, explained version of the notes I made during and immediately after the seminar, recording my own reflections and feedback received from my colleagues.' On rereading, and in relation to my writing up of subsequent workshops, this account felt somewhat laboured and monodimensional. Nonetheless, it was a useful beginning, helping me to develop habits of close attentiveness and self-awareness, and signalling some important areas for future attention. I present here extracts which illustrate both the character of my writing in this account and some of the issues which were raised in this first workshop, all of which recur in subsequent accounts (with the exception, significantly, of the other one in this chapter).

My first extracts summarise the observations which had been made during and after the Rostov workshop on my behaviour as a trainer, in particular my openness:

**'All my colleagues remarked on my openness of approach and delivery. Ruud said that he thought I was very balanced, and that that was 'one of the things that made me so good.' I was open, listening, but also actively eliciting, guiding and contributing. One thing Jo particularly congratulated me on was an intervention I made early on, when the group was being very undisciplined and inconsiderate, breaking their own ground rules by holding private conversations during sessions. I spoke clearly and for myself, saying how I felt about what was happening, and it had a remarkable effect.'**

I noted, however, that there had been times when I had held back some potentially useful or needed intervention because I questioned its appropriateness or was afraid of causing irritation. Nonetheless, at the end my co-facilitator

**'said he had liked the way we had been able to be pretty open in front of the group about our co-facilitation process, for instance, openly discussing dilemmas.'**

A colleague not involved in the facilitation commented on

**'the open way Jo and I seemed to work together and remarked that we must have prepared the relationship - which we had, in a meeting, quite openly and explicitly, sharing our anxieties and trying to describe ourselves to each other and make some agreements.'**

I have found, over these years, how important it is to establish trust and clear understandings, if co-facilitation is going to work well. Another passage in my account discusses the dynamics of co-planning:

**'We all agreed that our team planning process was open in itself and I was felt to be open within that process. Ruud commented that if anything I tended to give in too easily to his or Jo's point of view, and David observed that I sometimes just closed my eyes or lay down when I was too tired to go on, rather than stating my needs. Jo felt that sometimes in the planning he censored himself in relation to me, feeling I would not want to hear more ideas, or that I wanted to know where I was and wouldn't want to leave the agenda too loose. It wasn't that I didn't invite openness, but that he didn't want to 'push' me into things I'd find difficult (or he thought I would!).'**

Jo and I have since facilitated many workshops together, and have become less tentative in our working relationship, knowing more about each other's style and preferences and therefore more able to know how to respect ourselves and each other.

This close attention to the intricacies of working closely with someone else awakened me to the dynamics of co-facilitation, which are a recurrent topic in my accounts.

Planning sessions also raised the question of the balance between the exercise of power and responsibility by trainers, and openness to the ideas and wants of participants. In my account I wrote:

**'Ruud said that I struck a good balance in our planning sessions between being open to the thinking and wants of the participants and my/our own ideas of what would be useful and what would work. This view**

co-coincided with my own notes at the end of one day: 'I think we are still planning together in a pretty open way, and planning an open process. We really have taken into account the views and interests of the group, but also used our own wisdom in planning how to meet them'. '

If openness was a value that I and my colleagues wished to live out in this workshop, it also presented problems:

'David expressed some concern about the way our openness was experienced by the participants, especially in the first days of the seminar. We were being open to their needs and concerns and evaluations and responding very fully. The problem, if it was a problem, was that we were maybe not responding to their cultural expectations about learning: expectations concerning authority and leadership and didactic approaches. On balance he felt we had to go through the initial discomfort of this mismatch, explaining ourselves as coherently as possible (which we did).....In the event, the group seemed increasingly at ease with our style.'

These are the dilemmas raised by using a deliberately co-operative and nondidactic facilitation style, beginning with an open agenda, in a group not used to such methods and expecting to be 'taught'. They are part of the wider issue of working within a culture which is authoritarian in its habits and values in a training process whose assumptions are egalitarian. The whole idea of participatory problem-solving in conflict, in which the parties to the conflict are treated and behave as equals within a process, and third parties are involved as facilitators rather than arbitrators, is a very unfamiliar one in the former Soviet Union, as it became clear in this workshop:

'Mediation, a matter of great interest to all participants, is also a matter of facilitation. The group seemed able to absorb the idea of impartiality, but found that of facilitating a process - rather than suggesting or imposing solutions - very difficult. Perhaps they were not even convinced of its wisdom. We in turn found it difficult to know how to respond, but I did at least give voice to what I had observed. The idea of brainstorming options, being imaginative and even wild at first, was also clearly very foreign and not really taken on board - which provided us with good food for thought. This is a question of useful means rather than one of fundamental principles.'

A basic belief in human equality is, however, fundamental for me, and this was to be the first of many workshops in which I felt challenged in relation to this belief, particularly on the question of gender equality:

**‘Another cultural question, one not confined to the former Soviet Union, was that of gender. I was frequently, if not constantly, aware of it during the seminar, but did not in any direct way raise it with the group - not even the question of inclusive language - though I did raise it constantly with my colleagues. They were generally sympathetic to my concern, but clearly did not feel it acutely as I did. I was constantly aware of the macho attitudes of the men in the group (ie the substantial majority) and of the acceptance, most of the time, by the women of strong gender roles and patronising behaviour. We discussed at one point in the training team the possibility of using at least one session to look at gender issues, and I mooted the idea of a ‘female pronouns only’ day; but we never followed up on these discussions. We were trying to respond to the group’s wants in our agenda, and this was not one of them. However, I think the whole issue of domination and authoritarian approaches was one we did not perhaps sufficiently address, and of which the gender question is one key form.’**

At the conclusion of my account I wrote:

**‘the whole issue of domination and authoritarian approaches was one we did not perhaps sufficiently address - of which the gender question is one key form.’ Just how to respond respectfully to hierarchical views in workshops predicated on egalitarianism remains for me a key dilemma, one which runs like a thread through subsequent accounts.’**

This account also includes a brief discussion of the impact on the workshop of the need for translation to and from English - another recurrent theme in subsequent workshops. It is closely related to the question of cultural norms:

**‘The necessity for translation made a major contribution to the misunderstanding of tasks and questions, and also made it harder to detect when things were going wrong. As the seminar progressed, we learned to convey our meanings better by the use of examples and by modelling answers; but this in effect meant more talk by us, and therefore, of necessity, with the additional time needed for translation, less time for us to listen.**

Sometimes difficulties over words were also difficulties over concepts - as with the word 'facilitator', for which there is no translation because there is no social or educational equivalent. (The nearest word we got to was 'tamodan' or toast-master at a dinner or other festive or formal occasion.) Leadership is traditionally understood very much in terms of authority or hierarchy.'

Introducing new concepts often has to be done without available words to embody them: a difficult task indeed. This points to the enormity - and the questionableness - of what is being attempted. Later in my account I wrote:

'I feel that on the question of equality as against hierarchy, co-operation as against domination (including the gender question), we didn't have the basic bricks for our construction, or a common foundation on which to build. As in U.K. society, only more so, experience and expectations are of authoritarian systems and imposed solutions. This seems to me a fundamental challenge to cross-cultural training and the core values on which we want to base it. Maybe if we use processes which help people feel as accepted and engaged as possible, and engender the maximum psychological openness, we can make headway in this area; but we have to recognise that this agenda of ours may not be shared by most of our participants. I need to think much more about this.'

I have thought more about the whole complex of questions contained in that paragraph. They did not present themselves again, I think, quite so starkly; but in a sense they were ever-present.

A recurrent question at a more practical level, the question of how best to use time in a workshop, was one which I discussed briefly in my final reflections:

'Broadly speaking I think we covered the content areas it makes sense to include in a course of that length and for such a group. Naturally it would have been desirable to do more of everything: more on communication skills and on the things which get in the way of good communication, particularly prejudice and strong emotions; more on mediation and some work on negotiation without third party intervention. Looking back, I wonder if we didn't spend a disproportionate amount of time on concepts and analysis as compared with skills. Maybe that time spent was also important, but if we had streamlined our thinking and presentation, perhaps we could have achieved more in less time.'

I have since concluded that whatever one does, and however one does it, time will be insufficient: that is, insufficient to do everything, but an opportunity to do something. The following paragraph suggests what we did achieve in that workshop and what I have come to see as the most important things to be accomplished:

**'I think what participants did learn was to think for themselves, about conflict and responses to it, with some useful approaches to help shape that thinking, and a sense of the possibility of understanding situations and people sufficiently to begin to find ways into a problem and to unravel it. I think they also learned something, through our whole process, about listening and imagination, respect and empathy.'**

One other question came up in this workshop:

**'On the way home, Ruud commented to me that I hadn't read any poems during the seminar - a thing he had known me do before. I think that was because Jo was there as well as him and that I would have been embarrassed in front of the two of them, afraid of being seen as sentimental or as having misjudged the mood of the group and offered something inappropriate.'**

Later I reflected:

**'I think the 'existential' dimension is one we largely avoided. Perhaps that was playing safe and well advised. Maybe existential matters are beyond our remit. I wonder. If people are to find the motivation, courage and stamina, or the clarity of purpose, to undertake the very difficult work of conflict resolution in such areas of turmoil, they need to maximise the resources that come only from the deepest parts of themselves, and our seminars should make some attempt to address that need.'**

I found this account interesting to re-read, because it combined a collection of training issues which have re-presented themselves in subsequent workshops: time and how to use it; the overriding importance of raising awareness and offering new perspectives (as against filling people with 'knowledge'), coupled to cultural resistance to such a pedagogical approach; the learning that comes through the lived experience of the workshop itself, with the modelling of CR values

through that process; the appropriateness and/or realism of wanting to transfer attitudes which are foreign to those prevalent in a given culture; and the place given (or not) to philosophical underpinnings. Further experiences of work with groups from post-Soviet countries will be described in section four of my accounts.

## **BELGRADE**

The next workshop in which I was involved took place in June that year, in Belgrade. I wrote some reflections on this and earlier pieces of work in Belgrade for Adam Curle, when he was writing a book (1995) on 'positive response to contemporary violence'. Those reflections, which were quoted in the book, were included at the beginning of the previous chapter.

I want to include this workshop here because it gives another point of reference, another perspective, for my ongoing thinking about the purpose and appropriateness of training and facilitation as a form of intervention from outside.

To describe the purpose of this particular workshop, I shall quote from the funding proposal I wrote:

**'The group MOST (an acronym meaning 'bridge'), at the Antiwar Center in Belgrade, has asked Diana Francis and Jo Mackintosh to spend these days with them in order to facilitate a review and evaluation of their work and the planning of its further development. They will assess with them their training needs in these and other areas and facilitate advanced training sessions in relation to group maintenance and management, mediation, community development, prejudice reduction, and conflict resolution training. The considerable experience of the participants will furnish rich material for reflection and learning, in terms of both analysis and skills.**

**This is a group which is making an important contribution within Belgrade and beyond, both in training for conflict resolution and prevention, and in actual community work and mediation. Its members work in difficult circumstances and under considerable pressure. Outside support makes a difference. As the group's secretary wrote in their letter of invitation,**



*"We would be more than pleased and more than grateful if you could come here. It is really nice of you to say we are experts now, but we all agreed that your visit will be very useful and will mean a lot to us. We will feel more confident and more like 'experts' after your visit. We do feel it is important for us always to check and recheck our skills and knowledge."*

I have quoted these paragraphs because they show several important things. The first is that 'training' takes many forms. This workshop was in one sense not a training workshop, but one for evaluation and planning. However, to the extent that participants reflected on and learned from this process, it was also training in how to do things, including how to structure thinking. The workshop also provided learning on the learning process itself. In my workshop report, I described a 'sculpting' exercise through which we explored relationships within the group. Afterward we reflected with participants on the exercise itself, considering it as both a tool for exploration and an awareness training tool. In these ways, this workshop had a training element, as well as helping the group to forward its own thinking and clarity and build relationships.

The second important point which emerges from these paragraphs is the range of functions of outside facilitators and workshops like this, which I discussed more fully in the piece quoted in Adam Curle's book and in the previous chapter. Whereas much of the work I do does have a clear educational purpose, it is apparent from this explanation of our work in Belgrade that the provision of emotional space and support can be a very important - if sometimes unnamed - function of such workshops, and that the role they play in group formation can be of great value for future work and networking.

The third point I want to raise in relation to those quoted paragraphs is really more of a question or dilemma. The paragraph I quoted from our letter of invitation was a response to a letter of mine, in which I suggested that the group was well equipped to do its own facilitation. In saying the visit would 'mean a lot to us' the writer is confirming the importance of moral support; but she is also resisting the idea of the group's own expertise. On the one hand I recognise from my own experience the value of being helped by having an outside facilitator in order to step back and review things; on the other hand I sense some dependency. I will pick up this point in relation to a later discussion of work with people from the former Yugoslavia.

I did not write a special research piece about this workshop: only a report for the committee which was supporting the work. The report was purely descriptive and very detailed, so that I do not wish to reproduce it here. However, at the end of it I wrote:

**'From our daily evaluations and this final round, together with comments made to us outside of sessions, it would seem that our time with the group was useful. Apart from the help which participants got with their own issues, the workshop seemed to deepen the relationship between the different groups represented. Our friends were insistent that outside support is of great importance to them. In addition to its 'task' function of facilitating reflection and the development of new skills, it also fulfils the 'maintenance' function of psychological and emotional support, with someone else carrying some of the responsibility for a short while and holding the process. Above all, it relieves the sense of isolation and imprisonment felt at present in Serbia: a feeling particularly hard to bear for those who so abhor government policy and actions.'**

Maybe I did not see fit to write a special research account of this workshop because of the pressure of other work, or because I had not at that stage got into the hard discipline of writing up every workshop I facilitated. But maybe also it was because it seemed so different from most other 'training' workshops: more the facilitation of a group's reflections on its own progress and needs. But I think now that this may be a particularly useful form of learning by doing, applied training. It is possible only when the client group is already formed, or in formation, and has a particular job it is doing, or wants to do. Working with such groups is much easier to evaluate than work with ad hoc groups brought together in a temporary way for a workshop, since there are clear and immediate purposes to be met which have been identified by the participants. So it was with the first workshop I had done with this Belgrade group - at that time a group-in-formation. They needed training to carry out their purposes and they needed to use the training workshop as a vehicle of group formation. Both of these purposes were achieved in that they were enabled (as they said) to establish themselves and get on with their chosen activities.

Most of the workshops described in the accounts which follow are like the Rostov workshop, in that their content is of general application, albeit often focused on participants' own situations;

workshops designed to introduce an approach to conflict and offer some tools for understanding and handling it. More recently, however, I have worked several times with groups of people in one geographical location, wanting to learn and plan how to take action together. Since the usefulness of an intervention is related, in my thinking, to its respectfulness, I will return to the relative benefits of these different types of workshop in my concluding chapters.

In these early months of my research I had begun to experience what it was to be engaged in the process of inquiry. The Belgrade workshop raised no cultural questions, and no real issues about facilitation or theoretical assumptions. That was, I think, because of the nature of the workshop, in that it was working entirely practically, with the needs and experiences of a particular situation, and in a group already committed to the ethos and assumptions of conflict resolution. In the case of the Rostov workshop, I had gone with a view to concentrating on my own behaviour, and I think that was a good place to start. But I was also immediately confronted by cultural issues to do with respect in relation to pedagogy and in relation to conflict. My theory was not challenged in any specific way, but - more importantly - participatory approaches to handling conflict were, tacitly, heavily challenged. So Rostov provided me with a rude awakening: an excellent beginning for my inquiry.

## CHAPTER SIX

### INTERCONTINENTAL WORKSHOPS

In Belgrade and Rostov I was working, in very different ways, with groups of people whose culture was different from mine, but not different from each other's. In the two workshop accounts which are given in this chapter, the participant groups comprised many different cultures, so that I was not alone (with my co-facilitator) in being different. On the other hand, the cultural variety within the group introduced new questions and provided new experiences of the challenges of cross-cultural facilitation. In the first workshop I had an interesting and positive experience of cross-cultural co-facilitation, which helped me learn about my own strengths and weaknesses. In the second workshop I was a participant, not a facilitator. We were all trainers, and the meeting had been arranged for us to share experiences and values as trainers from different continents. Both workshops brought to light important questions about history and power, and both, in different ways, gave me an extraordinary opportunity for exploring ideas, from different cultural perspectives, about what matters to people in conflict. They also gave me a chance to discover some of the different cultural considerations that contribute to the meaning of respect.

Both workshops were also, in different ways, very demanding. I had to work hard to examine my own sense of identity and locate myself in these groups, and in the world, as an inquirer, facilitator, theoretician and human being, in the midst of so much challenge and variety. There were also major organisational difficulties cope with, and I had to struggle with exhaustion.

I returned twice to the same church centre in Geneva, at a later stage in my research, when I was not longer writing full-scale accounts, to provide opening and closing workshops for the centre's annual fourteen week 'Graduate School' for church people, again from all around the world. I will follow my first full account with extracts from my journal of those later workshops, since they include some important insights which fit in best with this 'intercontinental' chapter.

## GENEVA

This was the third major workshop that I facilitated in these first two years of my research. It was organised by an international and ecumenical church body, and the participants were all Christians of some variety. This was the first time I had facilitated such a broadly international workshop of this kind, and for that reason an incredibly intense time of learning. It was also a first in other ways. For instance, for the first time I chose, in consultation with my co-facilitator, to set out working assumptions at the outset (an idea I had learned from Jo in Rostov). It seemed a respectful thing to do: a way of sharing the power of understanding what was going on. In this workshop we emphasised our assumptions about experiential learning: from the experience of 'living with our differences'. Group dynamics and the role of facilitators constitute a major theme in the account, which records the shifting of power relations through the week, and the tensions among participants and between participants and facilitators. It is clear that my working relationship with George taught me a great deal about myself and about ways of carrying the facilitator role, as well as about culture, difference and commonality. The account still has the power to recall for me the intense emotions of that workshop: a salutary reminder of the degree to which my needs and motivations are present in the workshop, and the need for containment and reflexivity, as well as affirmation of my full-blooded presence.

This was the first occasion on which I used the 'stages' diagram (referred to in this account as the 'snake') as a frame for a workshop's agenda, and as an introductory mechanism to set out certain concepts and engage participants in thinking about their own conflicts. It was also the first time I used base groups as a vehicle for the distribution of power and responsibility, and for evaluation and feedback. (I think that was George's idea, based on his own experience.) Not so new was the issue of gender, which became central at a certain point in this workshop - this time for the group as a whole, rather than being, apparently, my concern alone, as it had been in Rostov. The question of whether or how to present or introduce discussion of nonviolence, as a fundamental value or philosophy, was in this religious context unavoidable. It has raised itself in different forms in subsequent workshops. The use of time was a bone of contention here, as elsewhere, and

represents for me an unresolved dilemma: how to balance rest and work, and to cover certain ground without too much pressure or density in the agenda.

The religious nature of the group certainly had an impact. In particular, the daily worship, organised and led by participants, drew them together. It was the expression of a common culture which transcended other cultural differences. In subsequent workshops arranged by the same church organisation, I have again worked in specifically Christian, trans-cultural groups, and it has been a powerful experience.

This account is extremely long and detailed. I have decided to reproduce it more or less verbatim, with the idea that to give one such detailed account will ground the reader in the moment by moment reality of what these workshops are like, in a way that generalised descriptions cannot. It also demonstrates in detail the nature and levels of my reflecting and recording - though the recording became much more selective in future workshops. A few minor editorial changes were made to the text, for clarification - for instance, the introduction of subheadings - in response to feedback from my supervisor and colleagues; and the explanation about the use of games was inserted. As with other accounts, I did not make other changes to the original text in response to feedback, since I wanted it to record the viewpoint I took and the responses I made at the given times of writing, weaving later reflections into the commentary. All names have been changed, as they have elsewhere.

NOTE: A different type face will be used for extracts from my journal. New commentary will be marked by square brackets.

**'LIVING WITH OUR DIFFERENCES - NONVIOLENT RESPONSES  
TO CONFLICT**

**Seminar held from August 5 - 14 1994 outside Geneva.**

**Account, notes and reflections compiled from my daily records of agendas and events, daily evaluations in plenary, feedback from base groups, evaluation done between my co-facilitator (George) and me, and my own journal writings.**

**Background**

**This workshop was organised by the an international and ecumenical Christian organisation in pursuance of its programme for 'overcoming violence'. It was intended for people working in all parts of the world, especially in situations of conflict and violence, for peaceful transformation, to give them an opportunity to share experiences and reflect together, to discover new ways of seeing things and acquire some new tools and skills.**

**I was at the original planning meeting and was invited to be the key 'trainer', finding such colleagues as seemed appropriate. In the event, after much thought and negotiation, I chose and succeeded in securing the partnership of George, a South African pastor from King Williamstown, who had been working for the Ecumenical Monitoring Programme in the run-up to elections in South Africa and was also a key member of his local Peace Committee. I think it would be useful to include here the text of a letter I wrote to him in February [six months before the workshop]. It demonstrates my approach to co-facilitation and to training, and my wish to be clear about both. It also indicates what I think I can and cannot offer as a trainer.**

*'Dear George,*

*As you know, I'm eager to secure you as co-trainer for this international workshop in early August. Peter and Anne [old friends and colleagues who had worked with George and recommended him to me] were quite clear with me that you would be an excellent colleague and described the preparation you have had and your own experience. I greatly respect their judgement and felt very happy to proceed on the basis of their recommendation. However, I quite understand your hesitations. I feel the same. I think, 'Who am I to do that?' Then I think that it is the people themselves who come together who*

*will bring the experience and the wisdom. What the trainers have to do is to provide a framework, be responsive, facilitate a process; and maybe we are able to do that, with each other's support.*

*I have more reason than you to feel diffident. I come from a relatively very safe part of the world and in some ways live a very comfortable life. That doesn't mean I have nothing to offer; but it does mean that as co-trainer or co-facilitator I should work with someone from a very different setting, with a kind of daily experience, and therefore perspective, that I lack.*

*As I understand it, you have both a deep understanding of nonviolence and strong experience of the dilemmas and challenges of trying to live it in situations of both structural and interpersonal violence. You also work from a faith perspective, which will be important in the context of this church organisation; and you have training experience.*

*If we wished, we could decide to draw in other help; or we could decide to rely on the resources present within the group -which I am sure will be considerable.'*

**George, to my intense relief, agreed to work with me, and we had a delightful planning meeting at a conference of the church organisation, held in Northern Ireland, in June. It felt as if we had been working together for years. He subsequently told me that this time we had, working together on the planning, had given him confidence both in me and in his ability to work with me. We decided against the idea of bringing in 'experts' and did not subsequently regret our decision. The workshop participants, (twenty-two in all, of whom eight were women) came from every continent and brought an immense wealth of experience and understanding.**

**What we did bitterly regret was the fact that, in spite of all our clarifications to the contrary, the organisers sent out a letter of invitation describing the event as a 'training for trainers'. Some of the participants who came would have been excellent candidates for such an event, or were even over-experienced for that; others were at their first training ever. This confusion of expectations and mix of experience was to prove a major problem, especially in the first days of the seminar. As I wrote in my journal on the day George and I arrived at the centre,**

**'We were both horrified to know of 'experts' coming to the workshop, which is intended for those whose expertise lies elsewhere. Gradually we came clear that we have to function as planned, because that's what's best for the group. If anything is off track, it's the presence of**



these two ( we didn't know at that time that there would be more); so we need to be clear with them what the workshop is about and who it was intended for and, if they see a problem, to invite them to think how they'll cope. We also will do our best to value them as equal group members with a particular expertise.'

### **Opening session, Friday**

Our first session, on the evening of Friday August 5th, was devoted to an official welcome from the organiser, introduction of the participants and trainers (first in pairs and then by each other to the plenary), and some scene-setting for the workshop as a whole. I explained that we would be seeing faith and practice as inextricably bound together, with our daily worship an important part of our programme; that we wanted the group to become a community of learning, using participatory methods and working in an informal and relaxed atmosphere; that the agenda we had outlined was therefore intended to provide a framework for the sharing of experience as the basis for the development of understanding, skills and commitment; and that the sharing of spiritual insights and resources would be integral to that process. The direct and immediate experience of living together as a group would provide a challenge to us all, coming as we did from very different cultures and lifestyles, and doubtless with some very different perceptions of the world. We would hope to discover much that was universal, but also to recognise, respect and even celebrate our differences.

In a quick brainstorm of words associated with conflict, painful associations at first predominated; but, with encouragement, participants produced many positive words as well. We wanted to establish that conflict is not only an inevitable but potentially a creative part of life. What matters is how we respond to or enter into it. The assumption made in the title and planning of the workshop was that we wanted to explore ways of doing so nonviolently.

We apologised for the confusion over the nature and intentions of the workshop, explaining that it would not be a 'training for trainers', though we hoped trainers would also learn from the whole experience.

George introduced the idea and composition of the base groups we had designed for support, evaluation and worship preparation, then went on to outline our planned

daily time-table. This caused something approaching an uproar, being seen by many as overloaded. We re-explained our thinking, but also promised to reconsider, taking into account the many different preferences being voiced by participants.

(We did not explain at this stage, but might usefully have done so, that we had planned that our daily agendas would be interspersed with songs and games - partly to provide a change of dynamic: to help people relax after tense or difficult work, to wake up after lunch, to laugh after sadness; partly to help people experience themselves as whole human beings together - to 'bond'; sometimes to experience in symbolic or bodily ways things which had been matters of discussion - for instance the game called 'knots', where participants make a tight circle, close their eyes, reach out and find two other hands to hold, open their eyes and then try together to resolve the resulting tangled knot into one or two circles: a symbol of and exercise in co-operative problem solving. The games are usually quite short, often quite 'silly', and often involve a lot of movement and touching. They therefore require cultural and general sensitivity on the part of the facilitators: judgements as to what individuals and the group as a whole will be comfortable with. For instance, I was afraid our bishop might feel that 'children's games' were beneath his dignity, whereas in fact he loved them; which only goes to show, I suppose, that such judgements are hard to make. In any case, participants always have the right to 'opt out'.)

In our post-session evaluation, George and I agreed that things had gone well till we came to the revolt over the time-table. We felt we would have done better to describe the evenings as 'free but' rather than as 'work but'. We thought we had supported each other well, but that maybe we had fought back rather too hard over the agenda! Now we had to be prepared to make concessions. As I write this now, I realise with what a conflictual attitude we had all begun, the 'experts' and generally powerful characters in the group wanting to flex and display their muscles, and George and I wanting to be clear about our role and responsibility - and therefore, at this stage, our authority.

In my journal I wrote at 11.40pm:

'I think George and I dealt with the turmoil in a mutually affirming way, also respecting the views of the group, wishing to give the voiceless a voice, as well as hear those who have already spoken. (This by asking for feedback from the base groups after further discussion.) We've made a complete redesign for tomorrow morning, to respect the process and check more carefully how people respond to our overview of the agenda. Were people respectful

to us? They were, on the whole, the quarter or so who were vocal; a bit strong in the case of the German (I had not learned names yet) - his words, that is, though his manner was light; others a bit gentler, but quite challenging; others helpfully supportive. No clear cultural influences. The German was disrespectful in talking while others were being introduced. Needs challenging if that continues. **(In the event, I did this much later.)'**

## **Saturday**

**On the Saturday, the first full working day, when we had gathered in silence, I began by introducing the 'snake' diagram, which we had used as the basis for our agenda outline. This diagram and explanation were received with enthusiasm, and many participants were quickly able to identify with the progression described by relating it to their own experience, locating themselves in the present at different points on the 'snake'. They made suggestions for additions and modifications to the diagram (which I had drawn on the white board) and I wrote them in.**

**In the second part of the morning, George invited participants to suggest, on the basis of some initial discussion in 'buzz groups,' what we all needed from each other to become a working community. From these ideas we agreed some mutual commitments. After a game, people then went off to do some group work, sharing their experiences of violence in its different manifestations. The learnings drawn from this process were reported back to the plenary, after a two hour lunch break, and I offered a definition of violence as whatever is done by choice which harms, oppresses or destroys, or which thwarts the natural fulfilled life of another being. I also introduced Johan Galtung's idea of the triangle of violence: direct, structural and cultural.**

**George went on to categorise possible responses to violence in three ways: to remain passive; to react with counter-violence; or to respond creatively, nonviolently. He asked participants to return to their groups to consider their own experiences of these three ways of responding and to try and identify some common characteristics of the third way.**

**After plenary feedback from that groupwork, we briefly evaluated the day, asking participants what they had liked and not liked, and what ideas or wants they had for future sessions. All had enjoyed the groupwork and some would have liked more time**

for it; the 'snake' diagram had gone down well and some would have liked more time for that too; the facilitation and participation had been felt to be good and the interpretation was appreciated. The heat had been very trying, but people thought we had all coped well. Some had enjoyed the long siesta, others had found it too long. Suggestions for the future mostly related to this last topic, though there was also a request for more theology and a proposal, vigorously countered, that the clergy should organise all the worship!

Each day closed with worship focused on a topic relevant to the day's work; so at this point we went off to the chapel, with the reminder that base groups were to meet after supper for further evaluation and reflection, and to report to us with feedback and suggestions. The person who was to have prepared this first evening was unwell, but other members of her base group put something together in a very satisfactory way.

Later, as we waited for the base group reports, George and I reflected that things seemed to be 'going OK'. There had been much positive feedback, especially on the first session and the 'snake', which seemed to have drawn in even those who had seemed inclined to be antagonistic. The reports from the base groups confirmed this impression. Participants felt we had worked hard to respond to their needs (one or two were impatient with all the demands and wanted us just to proceed according to our own plans), and most were content with the way the timetable had been arranged. Two individuals (who remained vocal throughout) wanted all afternoons free for sight-seeing, but they were strongly countered by others who wanted to work in the day and appreciated time for informal exchange in the evenings. The desire to have more time for everything was a recurrent theme throughout the seminar, and on this occasion one group expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of time allowed for plenary discussion. In fact our agenda had been eaten into by wranglings about time allocation, and we had been reluctant to lose content and had therefore perhaps tried to include too much, here and elsewhere.) Members of one group had felt that more equal participation in plenaries should be encouraged; also that it would help if some who were failing to do so could share real examples from personal experience, not just theories and generalisations.

My journal entry for that night reads as follows:

'People were very positive this morning after my introduction of the 'snake.' I think I earned their respect, and respected them by acknowledging their comments and incorporating them in the diagram. People's ideas about how we could become a real learning community included, strongly, ideas of respect, sensitivity and openness, and acknowledgement of differences while finding unity.

In practice, I find some group members less than respectful at times - rather strident/ clamorous in stating their needs and expectations, eg about days off as 'motivation'. I find it hard to respect that idea and don't even know that I want to. People who asked to come here I expect to have come for the workshop and its use/ meaning for them: I expect that to be their motivation, while I respect people's need for rest and re-creation.

We've taken all the feedback from the base groups - work well and thoughtfully done (with some fairly inconsiderate agenda-pushing mixed in) - and we're trying to acknowledge all needs and wants and meet the most urgent, bearing in mind the needs of the seminar and its content. George and I have felt fairly overwhelmed by what has at times seemed like a clamour, but have received also good affirmation, thanks and care, and quality honest observations from some.'

## **Sunday**

**The following morning, Sunday, after silence and a song, I delivered, as George and I had agreed, a report on the feedback we had received from the working groups, thanking them for the quality of the work they had done and the helpful way they had reported it to us. I then explained the decisions we had reached and why: to offer an agenda with substantial chunks of group work preceded by plenaries, to stay with the time-table of the former day, and see, after one more evening's feedback, whether we could stay with that or would need to alternate longer afternoon siestas with free evenings, and to offer the whole day free on the Wednesday, cancelling the evening session which had been scheduled. I explained that this was a concession particularly to those who had expressed a wish for more time for sight-seeing, and that it was the only concession we saw fit to make. Most of the group wanted to focus on the work in hand. The church organisation had invited and paid for people on that basis and it was our responsibility to maintain that focus. Relaxation and informal exchange and friendship enhanced the work done in sessions, but a balance had to be maintained, and we hoped that what we were now suggesting achieved that balance.**

**This explanation and these decisions, which we asked the group to accept, were indeed accepted, I think with much relief by most, if not all.**

We proceeded with a continuation in threes and fours of the previous afternoon's reflection on the characteristics of the nonviolent response. Many ideas emerged from this discussion, and some questions. In the subsequent groupwork and plenary discussion on the resources and inspiration for nonviolence in people's own faith and experience, these ideas and questions were further elaborated. The faith basis for nonviolence was clear to all - and the disastrous consequences of violence; but several remained doubtful as to the efficacy of nonviolence.

In the afternoon we went on to look at the methods of nonviolent empowerment: at group formation and the work of analysis which will need to precede action. First a model was offered for defining the injustice or violence which the group wishes to remove, and identifying the things - or the actual people - which support it or kept it in place. (We used the example of a peasants' land struggle in Brazil.) Then we presented a model for planning a campaign to build solidarity, and one for setting goals for alternative processes and structures.

Next, participants were divided into groups to share accounts of situations of violence they knew, and choose one for a case study, using the models which had been presented. This work took us to the end of the session, which closed with a song and a brief evaluation.

The work content was felt to be evolving well and the time spent in groups had been greatly appreciated, both for the opportunity it had afforded for people to get to know each other, and for the chance to exchange experiences and insights and analyse participants' own situations. There was a feeling that some people had tended to dominate plenary discussions and regret that there had been no opportunity to discuss passive and violent responses to violence, as well as the nonviolent way.

After the evening's worship, and supper, George and I once more reviewed the day as we waited for the base groups to report. Overall we felt very happy. The groupwork we considered to have been excellent. We agreed to remind people to rotate the tasks of group facilitation and reporting.

What emerged from the base groups confirmed the points made in the earlier evaluation. Our responsiveness as facilitators had been appreciated, as well as our clear assumption of our role. The daily pattern was acceptable to almost everyone,

and all were willing to go with it. The groupwork had given people a real chance to share feelings. Practical proposals were made about cold drinks, evening refreshments and workshop reporting; and an offer was made by one participant to present a case study of a campaign he personally had been involved in, using the day's models, in the following morning's plenary.

At some point during the day I had written in my journal, ' I realise how important communication is in fleshing out respect, as well as being an outcome of it. It's a great help here being able to talk with most people: the importance of language.' This theme recurred.

At bedtime I wrote,

'We've had a good day. Patience, intense work, intelligent weighing of differing needs, a will to balance responsiveness to wants with the requirements of the task and fair expectations of participants led this morning to a caring but assertive set of statements of intention which were accepted.

The respect which I see as at the heart of nonviolence was expressed here as 'love', emerging from faith reflection. That fits well with my own feelings noted earlier in this journal. The difficulties of remaining constant in nonviolence (ie sticking to nonviolence) are keenly felt by some participants. How can we (George and I) acknowledge that - give it time- while pursuing our agreed goal of focusing on the nonviolent option?'

## Monday

The following morning, the Monday, after summarising the base group feedback from the previous evening and explaining our thinking about the coming day, we took the case study reports from the groups which had worked the previous afternoon, using the three models for empowerment. I told the story of one particular action taken by the Brazilian peasants whose campaign had been used as our original example: an action of outreach to the militia. Then the participant from the Philippines, who had offered the previous evening to do so, told the story of a group of village women he knew who had used the models to analyse their own case of having their fishing rights removed, and plan a campaign for their restoration. This first hand account of a lived example made exciting listening and wholly engaged the group. ( I now see that if I had had time to consult with Ninoy before the previous day, this example would have been the one to use in the first place.) Key ideas in this session on self-empowerment by oppressed groups were the need for constant reaching out to the

other and dialogue, for building solidarity and trying to shift the opposition; also the need to calculate costs and risks and to be tirelessly persistent. After coffee, participants returned to their groups to continue to work on their case studies: one on terrorism in Egypt, one on the continuing deforestation of Ethiopia, and one on the five hundred years of colonialism and the expropriation of land in Latin America. The task now, building on the analysis, was to set objectives and devise a plan of appropriate action for the initial stages of a campaign.

After lunch, siesta (or for some a shopping expedition) and a game, the groups went on to select a particular episode in one of their planned actions to test out in a role play, to gain some insight into the human dynamics of such action (including the feelings of the opposition) and a sense of the skills and resources that would be required by the nonviolent activists. The groups returned to plenary too late to report on their action plans and their role plays, so reports were held over till the following morning and we went straight into evaluation. The participants had been really engaged in the groupwork and were generally tired and content. The interpretation which had made the groupwork possible was greatly appreciated. (One group at least had included language difference as a feature in their role play, both as a practical expedient at the time and because it was real for their chosen situation, where indigenous people were lobbying the ruling race (in Guatemala). (I realise 'race' is a taboo word, but can think of no other for this context.)

George and I reflected later that it would have been useful to have spent more time at the beginning of the workshop on group dynamics and helpful and unhelpful roles and behaviours of individuals in groups. (I don't remember what exactly gave rise to that thought). We noted that it would have helped the groups, when they were making their action plans and preparing for the role plays, if we had asked them to be sure they were clear who they were in the chosen scenario. We were greatly relieved and really delighted that the group which had had greatest difficulty at the stage of analysis (the Latin America group, which had had to use interpreters throughout) had really 'got into it' when it came to planning for action, and had done a wonderful role play -incorporating the language problem (see above). All the groups had worked through the entire task, experiencing their own difficult patches and blossoming at different points; and we had gone with the flow, supporting where necessary and stepping right out of things at other times. Our instructions had not always been closely followed, but had provided a framework for real engagement with real issues.



Feedback from the base groups supported this assessment. The extended group work had been greatly appreciated: the chance to follow something right through. There was some eagerness to be moving on to the 'conflict resolution' part of our programme and some concern that the programme for the following day now looked overloaded. Someone offered to present something in relation to 'dealing with stereotypes'. Satisfaction was expressed that our evening worship was integrated with the content of our work. A deepening sense of community was noted within the whole group.

In my journal that night I wrote,

'I think again in our facilitation today we respected our own agenda *and* the energy and direction of the groups.

One interesting thing said by a Zambian to a South African (in an evening conversation over wine) was that it was not acceptable in his culture ever to remind someone of past favours or to look for gratitude. This was in reference to the economic sacrifices made by Zambia, and ordinary Zambians, in solidarity with the liberation struggle in South Africa. Zambians clearly feel patronised by South Africans, which from my observations they are. But the South Africans also clearly recognised the costly support they were given. They sang for Nelson (the Zambian) the song of gratitude sung by ANC people leaving Zambia to return home.'

I observed in myself some patronising feelings towards Nelson. I thought maybe they were a response to his, in European terms, 'baby face', and, in comparison with the other Africans, poor English (all deeply reprehensible in me); but when I really took the time to talk to him and came to like and respect him, I found he carried some post-colonial feelings and perceptions which were reflected in his demeanour and would tend to encourage patronising responses. He said, for instance, that in Zambia a trainer with a black face would not command enough respect to run a successful seminar. I was horrified and said that whereas I could understand how that might be so, until he and others could put that behind them they would never be able to take their real power and use it.

I also noted that the Burundi bishop, who had seemed so far a little stiff and, I felt, standing on his dignity, had loosened up, made some very good jokes and joined with enthusiasm in some very silly games. As the week went on, we were ever more aware of the pain and anxiety he carried for what was going on in Burundi. If we had been

more aware in the first place, we could perhaps have supported him better from the start.

## **Tuesday**

On the Tuesday morning George and I had decided to make space for the airing of doubts and difficulties about nonviolence: the debate which some had been wanting to happen. It seemed to us to make sense first to have a good look at the philosophy and methods of nonviolence. Now that we were coming to the end of this section on empowerment, we needed to come back to the unfinished business of doubts and obstacles before moving on. So after reports from the groups on their previous day's work, we invited participants to think how the work they had been doing related to their own situations, and to consider what were the obstacles to following 'Jesse's third way'; what kept people in passivity or drove them to counter-violence. We invited them to share their thinking first with two or three others.

The plenary discussion which followed was long and very heavy, taking the rest of the morning. The pain and despair in the group were almost palpable and we seemed to be going down and down. I felt very diffident about intervening, but there came a point when I felt we needed some reference point outside our present pit, and spoke in recognition of the pain, but also for hope: for what Adolpho Perez Esquivel [Nobel Prize Winner from Argentina] calls 'relentless persistence', for starting small, for Luis Aguirre's [a Uruguayan colleague's] 'seamless garment' of the world-wide movement for transformation. I think I chose the right moment, and we climbed up and out, ready to move on. What had taken place was not a debate, but an outpouring; not a challenge to faith, but an expression of doubt, frustration and grief; and through this process we had been drawn more closely together in our shared hopes and aspirations.

In the afternoon we opened with a good rowdy game, then returned to the 'snake'. We had reached the stage described as 'conflict resolution' and formed new groups of five or six to look at the question, 'What are our insights and values as people of faith for living with our differences? What are our principles for co-existence?' These groups reported back after tea, having evidently shared and generated some profound understandings at many levels. We then brainstormed ideas about what in our experience makes things better or worse in a conflict: helps and hindrances in the

moment. The list produced was somewhat overloaded with abstract nouns and short on specific behaviours. This reflected a recurrent tendency in the group to feel more at ease with theories and generalisations than with immediate and specific experience.

To round off this session I drew and explained the 'ice-berg' model for conflict resolution, which begins from a base of respect, on that builds communication, and through communication works towards the co-operative task of generating and selecting options for an inclusive solution to the conflict.

The closing evaluation was very positive. Participants had found it really moving to share their feelings in the morning's session: their 'inner selves' as one person put it. It had been a 'highlight.' And one commented, 'It's OK - it's a group.' There was a general feeling of having arrived. Afterwards I wrote,

'The morning session was felt to be a fitting culmination and rounding off of our first days together - the first section of the snake. The plenary before lunch was full of pain and despair, but also determination and hope. I think I helped with my intervention a little over half way through, acknowledging the pain and despair but also identifying some sources of hope and inspiration. George was great. He's so steady and has such a lovely warm manner. The afternoon seemed fine, but I was too tired to judge any more. The evaluation was a bit sketchy beyond the morning, as a good few had gone to prepare outdoor worship - which was wonderfully moving. Base groups failed to meet - which was fine. We all felt on holiday.'

(The next day was to be free.)

The worship sessions both fed into and reflected the spirit and content of our work. So did our singing and playing.

### Wednesday

The Wednesday was for the participants an opportunity to visit the headquarters of the church organisation, have a nice lunch and see something of Geneva. For George and me it was a chance to recuperate, just *be* together, and take stock and make plans for the rest of the week. Our agreed outline agenda and the constant evaluation and feedback process we had devised made this as easy as it could be. The planning took many hours, but was well interspersed with personal conversation of all kinds.

George astonished me with accounts of things he did as part of his Xhosa culture - like slaughtering an animal to bring an end to a run of bad luck. This for him sat perfectly comfortably with his Christianity. It made me wonder what things I did and took for granted, which others would see as at odds with my proclaimed (or assumed) beliefs. It seemed strange that we should feel so much at ease with each other in that place and work, when we carried such different worlds on our backs. We also exchanged accounts of our parents' deaths: a very intimate thing to do. We shared many of the same assumptions and feelings, though the scenarios and events were also very different. In all of this the thing which struck me and touched me was that we were able to talk quite freely, being as open about surprise and difference as we were about recognition and sameness, and finding our oneness in both: which sounds corny, but I don't know how else to say it.

#### **Thursday**

On the Thursday morning we looked in more detail at the 'iceberg' model and then went on to do some listening exercises. We used a representation of a mouth and an ear and the space in between to invite thinking about the complexities of communication which arise from the moods, expectations, attitudes and capacities of speakers and listeners, and the contexts in which they find themselves.

After the break and a discussion of the characteristics of assertive speaking, participants were asked to think of a situation in which they had been passive or aggressive rather than assertive, and to describe that situation to their partner, asking them to be 'the other' and trying out in a mini role-play a new, assertive approach.

Leonardo, a Spanish speaker from the Dominican Republic, had provided us with an excellent role model the previous afternoon, when he had come to the microphone at the end of the evaluation and said, 'When I get up and speak and everyone has to run for their headsets, I feel discriminated against, because I have to wear mine all the time to hear you, and I want to be able to speak without having to wait for you to be ready.' I had used this as an example when introducing the idea of assertive speaking. Eli, a Finnish participant, offered us a neat formula for helpful communication: Smile, Open, Forward, Touch, Eye-contact, Nod (whose first letters spell 'soften').

Some people were pleased with this, but when we questioned the group it emerged that these guidelines in many cases were culturally determined and could be taken as universal only in spirit - not in the particular: a useful learning.

Before lunch we had time for a brief discussion about the difficulties of handling strong emotions in order to be appropriately assertive as we would wish.

In the first afternoon session, thinking of stereotyping as one obstacle to good communication, we looked at the question of identity and belonging: the different groups we were part of and things about those groups that we were either proud or ashamed of. We also recalled times when we had been on the one hand victims of discrimination and on the other hand guilty of discrimination ourselves. We spoke about the need to be critical of our own cultures, as well as valuing them, and able to respect others and their identities while at the same time being able to take issue with a particular approach or behaviour.

After tea we introduced the idea of 'reframing,' or finding new approaches to relationships and problems. One form of reframing needed is a shift from seeing a problem as being caused or suffered by one party, with one alone able to solve it, to seeing it as being the affair of two and often several parties who all need to contribute to a solution and be included in it. In 'needs and fears mapping' the parties are identified and their different needs and fears listed: a method of gaining some insight into the way each relates to the problem. This George introduced, using by way of illustration a case from his own experience of local government in South Africa.

Before going into the final evaluation I told the group that the next morning they would be trying out this 'needs and fears mapping' on their own case studies. I reported that one or two women had said to me that it would be good to have the opportunity to work in an all women group at some point and asked whether this might seem an appropriate opportunity for that to happen. At this point 'the shit hit the fan.' Pain, indignation and incredulity were expressed by several men in quick succession. I asked for one of the women whose idea it had been to explain the request, which one of them did most gently, caringly and clearly. This helped some to be less defensive, but there was still much leaping to the mike by men - in some cases to complain that it was for the women, not the men, to speak and choose. Three other women did speak, but very briefly: two to support the idea of an

opportunity to work together as women, and one to say that she herself did not have such a wish, although she had no objection to others' doing so.

One of the South African men was very angry: not, he said, because he had any objection to the idea, but because of the way it had been brought to the group, by me, as he saw it. This was puzzling, since I had explained that I had been approached by women participants with the request, and was presenting it on their behalf. He explained that he couldn't see why the idea hadn't been raised in the base groups; so really what I think he was complaining about was the lack of openness at that level, rather than what I at first heard, which was that I was using my role as facilitator to push my own agenda. I suppose these two explanations are not mutually exclusive, ie he maybe saw it all as a plot between me and one or two individuals. Although that seems to me an unduly negative interpretation, since I was open and exact with the group about how I came to be making the proposal, I can see that this was aside from the regular procedure of individuals making proposals to the facilitators via the base groups.

Had I grasped clearly what (I think) he was saying at the time, we could have discussed whether this was improper and why it had happened that way - which would have been interesting and might have revealed something about the dynamics, particularly male-female dynamics, in the base groups. As it was, I apologised for any unclarity in my explanation and the participant in question accepted my apology but still seemed very angry. I and others tried to talk to him at intervals during the next two days, but he remained angry and distant and kept saying it 'was over' and that there was 'nothing to talk about'. Then suddenly he was back with us, fully engaged and very helpful. Maybe he had been dealing with problems of his own. It had been clear from the start that he was carrying a great deal of pain and anger from his own experiences in South Africa.

Before the session closed we reached agreement that if there enough women who would like to work in a women's group the next day they should do that. In the evaluation which followed, participants noted that it had been good for us to recognise that we had some unresolved problems ourselves and had had to handle our own conflict. The men had been affirmed within the process (I'd have liked some more real affirmation of the women) and we had a real sense of being a group, continuing to get to know each other better. On the negative side, it was noted that

in the debate men had spoken more than women, that men had resisted the idea that women should have the opportunity to meet as women, and, conversely, that women had sought to discriminate between males and females.

There was also a complaint that not enough time had been allowed for plenary reports from group work, which showed that work was not taken seriously and that time management seemed more important than the depth of discussion. Here I interposed that this imputation of motivation - or lack of it - to the facilitators was out of step with the guiding principles for assertive speaking discussed earlier in the day, but acknowledged, and acknowledge now as I write, that we clearly had (mis)managed time in such a way as to engender these feelings, losing touch with the felt needs of at least some members of the group. Maybe, with hindsight, we should have jettisoned some input; maybe I should have screened out Eli's SOFTEN [communication formula - see above] - and run the risk of seeming to disrespect her and her group, which had proposed the inclusion of her contribution; maybe we should have taken time from another day. But what we had been striving above all else to do was to take advice which had already come to us from one of the base groups to give plenty of time to the final 're-entry' phase of the workshop - advice which coincided with our own thinking - and therefore condense things, regrettably, at this stage in order to take pressure off the end.

We left for the evening worship all feeling, I think, tired and emotional. I noticed that I was really hurt and exasperated by the abrasive style and, I felt, unreasonable demands of Heinz, the German - whom I also greatly liked and in many ways admired. So before supper, knowing I would not be able to do so without tears, but unwilling to carry such bad feelings about one of the participants, I spoke to him. I told him how much I liked him and the things I admired about him, but also how I felt about his words and behaviour, giving him specific examples of what had upset me and why, acknowledging at the same time that George and I had not always got things right. I apologised for my tears and explained why I had chosen to speak to him immediately rather than wait till I had a better chance of self-control.

His response was entirely positive. He was shocked to realise the impact of his words and style; acknowledged that he had not considered that I might need affirmation as well as criticism, and that the demands made by him and others were often mutually incompatible, appreciated my openness and affirmation and gave me plenty in return,

(to the point of coming to me later and saying he would like some day to have the chance of working with me). We were still able to discuss the issue of time given for group reports in an honest way. Altogether I felt we had both done well and lived, in this instance, our beliefs, being respectful and open to ourselves and each other.

The groups which met for evaluation that evening were not the usual base groups, but regional groups which also had the task of preparing contributions for a 'cultural evening' prepared by one of the base groups. The feedback these regional groups gave us included the view from one quarter that I was very democratic and that this made trouble for me. Consensus was difficult to achieve and I would do well to be more dictatorial. This same group expressed its appreciation of the facilitators' role and comments, but felt that the contributions of both facilitators and other participants in plenary discussions on group reports were sometimes too long: we could all be briefer. And they made the significant observation that some of the more meaningful things shared in small groups people were not willing to repeat in plenary, so that the true depth of group discussions was not mirrored in the plenary sessions which followed.

This was the European group, the one Heinz was in. I felt the carefully affirmative and constructive way in which critical feedback had been framed was an indication either that he was having a very particular influence within the group, or that he had shared with the group the content of our conversation, or that the group had seen that I was upset and had been particularly careful - caring - in the way they framed their feedback.

The men in the Africa group, according to their report, had found the intensity of the work done in twos and threes difficult, and would have preferred to spend more time in plenary. (One of the things most of the women found difficult about many of the men was their unwillingness to stop generalising and theorising and share real personal experience.) The group also commented that the confusion in the original workshop invitations about the purpose of the workshop had created difficulties for them as participants and us as facilitators. They had asked themselves what they would have gained by the end of the workshop, in exchange for all the experiences they had shared. (I greatly appreciated the honesty of this report - felt honoured by it. I shared their frustration of course, but can also say that this was a kind of



**'bottoming out' phase, and that by the end of the workshop these people, despite their justified criticisms, were glad to have been there.)**

**The Asia group had liked the day in general, but reported some dissatisfaction that the women's issues had been taken so seriously when other requests had not been met. Here we detected a harking back to one participant's regret that we had not spent more time on introductions - and he had missed the first round anyway, by arriving late - and that they had not had written advance information about participants. We decided to ask each participant to write a paragraph about her/himself to be sent out with a corrected address list after the workshop.**

**In my journal that night I wrote,**

**'Midnight and it's too late and I'm too tired for much reflection; but to-day George said it 'was coming' and he was right: the experiential learning...I was caught with my own deep passion and identity to handle in my role as facilitator. I think I coped well. I was also exhausted by it and had to cope with what felt like another attack from Heinz on another front - which was the last straw from him - which I also feel pleased about the way I handled. I went to him knowing I would cry and explained my difficulty - I could scarcely speak - but spoke my admiration to him and my pain and my complaint and my deep need for affirmation as well as criticism as clearly and as non-attackingly as I could and he heard me well and we loved each other and were still able to explain to each other our views and difficulties regarding the agenda.'**

**(Here I should perhaps comment that when I first wrote my account description of this episode, I had not re-read the above journal passage. I am interested to find how closely the two accounts resemble each other - only the contemporaneous one contains even more emotion.)**

**The night's entry concludes,**

**'Great, happy party to-night after all the grief. Only Leicester (from South Africa) missing and Sarah (the main speaker for the women's group proposal) still shaken.'**

**We had in fact processed our conflict sufficiently for the party to be wonderfully timely. We all relaxed and let go and revelled in each other's company and the richness of the group, and ate and drank and forgot, or at least set aside, the burdens we carried -even the threatened war in Burundi. The Asians performed a macabre skit about the disposal of a corpse and I was afraid it would be too near the bone for the**

bishop; but he entered into the spirit of things and laughed a lot and really seemed to let go of his troubles for the evening.

## **Friday**

The next morning, after thanks to the party organisers, and our usual report on base group feedback and agenda review, we collected ideas on third party roles in conflict, both positive and negative. We focused on the mediator role, and asked for examples from participants' own cultures: who might perform the role and how they would go about it. George then summarised the steps which seemed common to mediation in all cultures and got the group to brainstorm the qualities and functions of a good mediator.

After the break, four groups, including one of women only, worked together on their own chosen case of conflict, mapping the needs and fears of the different parties to the conflict, then devising a role-play in which some kind of mediation was attempted. This group work we allowed to take its own time, and in the event it lasted through most of the rest of the day, with reporting in the final session. We had invited the groups to consider the option of taking as their case study our own conflict of the previous day. The only group which seriously considered this option was the women's group, and in the event they decided to examine instead the injustices against women in their own countries, mapping their needs and fears. They produced a very substantial and sobering report, and never got to the role play. In other words, they deviated from the set task and used some of what they had been offered for their own purposes - which seemed fine to George and me.

Another group had reverted to a previous case (Ninoy's Philippino fisherwomen) and re-analysed it, using needs and fears mapping to report on the findings of their role-played mediation rather than to inform it - which also seemed fine. More regrettable was the plight of the group which had failed to get beyond a rather general and inconclusive discussion, on account, they said, of the lack of adequate interpretation and sporadic absences of group members. One group only followed our proposal in a thorough and faithful way - and they were (or Heinz was) a little indignant that others had failed to fulfil the allotted task. George and I were delighted that the participants had little by little taken more responsibility for the running of things and had used

**the day in ways which were useful to them. We were not expecting uniformity and had supported the groups' choices as we went around.**

**Apart from the disappointment of the group which had been hampered by inadequate interpretation, the closing evaluation of the day was entirely positive. Some of the things said were an expression of the group's relief that we had weathered the storm over the women's group issue: that the feared thing had happened and that in the event it had not destroyed our unity. Our facilitation was appreciated and the ample and flexible time given for the groupwork and reporting back was gratefully acknowledged. There was another flow of gratitude for the great pleasure of the previous night's party, where all had belonged and participated: a proof of the 'culture of peace'. David (from Ethiopia)'s poem, written and read in stages while the party was in progress was seen as having captured the spirit of the evening.**

**Early the next day I wrote,**

**'Working with George has been the great blessing of all this. He's not into self-doubt and self-blame. If we clearly made a mistake he'll say so, but from the point of view of someone who doesn't think that's a big deal - just part of being human: a very good lesson for me.**

**Yesterday felt very relaxed and feedback was positive. People tried to be affirming of the women's group work (despite inappropriate laughter and profound incomprehension in some ways from some people) and the analysis the women produced - and instances - was powerful. To-day again we're very relaxed. I was saying to George that little by little power has shifted from us to the group, though we still provide the frame. The group has grown into being progressively more of an entity able to take power productively.'**

**We had asked the base groups to give us some idea of their priorities for the use of our last full day together and on this, as in enthusiasm for the day we had just enjoyed, there was unity: we should proceed to the question of reconciliation and forgiveness, and work, in these final stages, in regional groups. This George and I had planned to suggest for the 're-entry' session, but now decided to propose for the whole day.**

**Saturday**

**We began the Saturday with some first farewells: sad; then explained the day. The first topic for the regional groups was as follows:**

**'From hurt to reconciliation: what does it take, for ourselves and others? What are the ingredients and steps needed, both internal and external (within ourselves and out in society) from the point of view of our faith and our experience?'**

**The plenary session in which we heard the reports from the four regional groups (Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America, with the remaining person from the Middle East opting to work with the Asians) lasted until lunch. A few would have liked to discuss the reports - particularly the differences between them - in plenary. Others, wishing to preserve the regional session planned for the afternoon, preferred to continue the discussion, as appropriate, in regional groups. Seeing that this procedural debate could last indefinitely, George and I conferred and then offered our judgement: that the regional groups should reconvene immediately after lunch. This decision was accepted by all, with much relief. (Also in this session I had finally reprimanded Heinz for talking to his neighbour while someone else had the mike.)**

**Later I noted again,**

**'The group has little by little started almost running itself, power and responsibility having largely changed hands and we facilitating very lightly. Ironically, we have also twice to-day (over the how to continue the discussion on reconciliation and over the use of a room) made decisions for the group in a direct way for the first time and they've been glad. They're confident now in their own power and accepted our decision-making happily, seeing it as a service.'**

**The first task for the groups in the afternoon was therefore to discuss the different reports from the morning; then to locate themselves on the 'snake' once more - and of course that positioning depended on the specific situations of different countries and the particular work of individuals. Then they were asked to consider how they saw their task now: what positive initiatives had already been undertaken and whether they had any new insights into their potential role.**

**The session's work was intense - especially in the large Africa group, which had had a tough but productive morning on the subject of forgiveness and now produced a most impressive report. But the others also found the time useful for drawing threads together and reaching conclusions. The closing evaluation confirmed the sense of satisfaction everyone had found in these regional sessions and the real substance of this final work together. Only one of the Latin Americans felt sad that, as he saw it,**

his region was peripheral in world opinion these days, and that this had been reflected in the workshop. (I think the language barrier had a lot to do with this feeling, and it remains a question whether enough had been done, in the circumstances, to overcome it. The LA group had certainly been isolated in many ways and at many times.) Leicester [the South African who had been so angry], whose re-engagement had been such a gift to the group, expressed his satisfaction that the whole group had been willing to work together till the end, and another participant was grateful for the reassurance of having reached the 'win-win' stage of the conflict resolution process and concluded that real solutions were possible. [I think that must have been the last time I used the expression 'win-win.]

The base groups did not meet that evening. We all went to see the annual firework display in Geneva.

#### **Sunday**

After our usual silence and song on the final Sunday morning, we played a game and then got down to the business of overall evaluation. The first question, considered in groups of three or four, was

**'Living with our differences: how did we do it - with our own differences of race, gender, culture, personality and regional perspective?'**

Then, working in the same groups, participants were asked to evaluate the content and process of our work, the way the group as a whole had engaged with it and the way they as individuals had engaged with it.

In this evaluation, it became clear that the learning which came from our own differences and the way we had lived with them had been of great importance to all the participants. They had 'learned a lot *about* other cultures, personalities and mentalities, different perceptions and understandings,' but also experienced directly the difficulties and the rewards of being part of such a disparate community: 'learned to live with our differences as a group, and how to work together - in group work and through the processes we learned for conflict resolution.' Another group said that we had all 'gone through the process' of empowerment and conflict resolution. We had

begun with a 'single goal' and started by trying to find what was common to us all, but through the work and the living had found and affirmed our differences.

Recognising these differences had, in the words of another group, enriched us. We had learned to appreciate them, to respect each other, to be considerate and where necessary to compromise. We had also 'broadened our understanding of different situations in different countries through open sharing.' Yet another group described our achievement as 'having become a family here together. We had conflicts over contents and about the women's group, but we coped. We developed strong personal relationships. We found that coming from different cultures, races and ideologies doesn't prevent people from living together.' And the Latin America group, which had suffered so much isolation because of language, said nonetheless that our 'goal had been attained'. In spite of all our differences we had been able to be a model of co-existence, recognising our differences, accepting and discussing them to our mutual enrichment. Respect had prevailed. This had confirmed us in our commitment to the promotion of a nonviolent culture, a 'culture of life.'

It is clear to me from these evaluations that the learning which comes from the sharing of information and reflection, and the learning which comes from the experience of the group dynamics - which also involves the planned and explicit learning processes of the workshop - are not separate in reality, although they can be separately named and to some extent separately discussed. As the Latin America group put it, 'The methodology and the process dynamics were very important in bringing us to an understanding of each other.' Another group felt that what they saw as a concentration on input and skills in the first few days had at that stage stifled debate on issues which needed to be grappled with - thereby, presumably, hampering the healthy processing of differences. My own assessment is that we held them in suspension until people were able to cope with them more maturely.

The programmed content of the workshop was generally considered good and relevant, enriched as it was by cultural exchange; but also 'packed'. This was certainly a source of pressure and friction at times, and doubtless limited potential learning.

On the other hand, the variety in the programme had made for enjoyment and full personal engagement, and the whole process was considered to have been participatory and open. The use of the base groups, and the flexibility and

responsiveness of the facilitators, were appreciated. One group at least felt that time management had been good. The pack of written materials provided by an international nonviolence organisation was seen as an excellent resource for further learning and as a tool for participants who planned future training work.

Our worship, in which we had shared at the deepest level our differences and our unity, was seen by everyone to have played a key role in our growing and learning together - along with our cultural evening and all our singing and playing, our talking and laughter. Through it all we had, as one group put it, 'internalised' the idea of living with differences. We would go back prepared to 'do' it. As someone else said, 'Peace is the way' and our workshop had been part of the peace process.

Finally, participants were asked to consider what, if anything, the church organisation should do as follow-up to this workshop. All wished to see future workshops organised at the regional level. One group suggested another fully international workshop too, but dividing 'beginners' from more 'advanced' participants. Another group proposed a real 'training for trainers' and the preparation of people who could be peace-makers, for instance mediators, at the regional level. They saw our present group as a core group for this future programme expansion. The church organisation was seen as a potential provider of help with networking (as was the nonviolence organisation) and of financial help and training materials. It was proposed that the church organisation should write for further, considered evaluations after three months and again in a year's time. [Because of a change in staff, this follow-up was not carried through.]

After the results of all these deliberations had been reported, the rest of the morning was given to thanking, giving presents, hugging, and writing nice things about each other on each other's backs. Our final worship, held outside under the trees, ran well into lunch time and was full of joy and gratitude, a fitting celebration of all that we had shared together and all that motivated us to keep up the struggle - which by now we understood to be one: one struggle, one life.

Afterwards George said to me, 'It's been a good group because we performed a miracle' (meaning a miracle in the light of all the confusion as to for whom and for what the workshop was intended) I wonder. We had certainly worked hard, and with all our intuition and intelligence, to help this group of disparate individuals with widely

varying needs and wants to find also a unity and discover a common purpose, to learn from each other's experiences and from the shared experience of being and struggling together. We had also shared things from our own hearts and minds and lives which we felt could be of use. Some of the difficulties which confronted us all - those caused by confusion over purpose and participation, and those caused by inadequate organisational support - could have been avoided, in which case the learning from what I can only call the 'out there' content would have been more focused and probably more satisfactory and immediately useful. On the other hand the learning from our own difficulties would perhaps have been less.

At the airport later that afternoon I made the following notes:

'The final evaluation was, overall, very positive. Reflections on how we had 'lived with our differences' recorded the strong desire to find unity, especially at first, but, as we went on, participants' acceptance and celebration of difference. As George said, we encouraged that by starting the process in mixed groups and coming to the regional work only towards the end, when our commonalities had been experienced and we were strong enough as a community to acknowledge differences. The *hint* of South-North blaming and guilt that I felt early on really disappeared later. Though the analysis, which was shared, remained the same, a spirit of respect and solidarity increasingly informed it.'

(As I reflect now, if we had wanted deliberately to sharpen conflict within the group, in order for people to learn from it, we could have done it the other way round, ie started with regional groups. If, however, our process is intended also to model what we 'teach,' I think that a model designed to provoke conflict would be a dangerous one. One could start from difference and separation in a deliberate and focused way which would enable reflection first on the things which divide, before moving towards a focus on the things which are shared. I'm not sure whether that would have produced a similar end result. In any case, I think our learning from our own interactions was very important and could perhaps have been even more so.)

Of course the evaluation wasn't 100% positive. Almost all the regrets related in one way or another to shortage of time, and George and I felt you couldn't really do a longer seminar (because of the likelihood of complete exhaustion) or include less in it, given the topic; and cost and distance meant it all 'had' to be covered at once. Different people put priority on different things, which means you can't please everyone all the time. People who couldn't have more time in groups or for plenary reporting and discussion felt sometimes that their work or responses were not respected (I think probably only one or two and once or twice.)



One, maybe two, of the participants felt we should have fixed a firm programme and just stuck to it. In fact we followed very much our original plans for content, expanding, predictably, into the spare day we had kept for options or as a 'cushion'.

We felt the base group process for feedback, in addition to the daily end-of-session evaluation, was an excellent way of respecting the feelings and wants of participants, as well as our function as facilitators. Without this system we guess we would have fallen apart, with the group we had. It also served to help the bonding process.

I think we did right to leave most of the expansiveness (opportunity to allow participants to take their time) to the last couple of days, so people felt really good at the end. And I think our final affirmation games and celebrations and speeches were all important. I think we all left feeling we had become a community and were not only respected but loved.'

**And here I added a thought I have written elsewhere: 'Perhaps only love can counteract hate. Respect lacks the emotional force needed.'**

**I have since reflected that the community was a temporary one, and that learning inferred from this experience could be misleading. Had we stayed together for much longer, we would most likely have entered new phases of conflict. Nonetheless, given the respect and affection which had developed between us, we could probably have handled them. The question for wider reflection may be how to create community out of difference in 'ordinary' (and extraordinary) life.)**

'George said he'd never experienced real shared facilitation as we had done it together, and that having met me and planned with me before was what had made it possible for him (and me) to cope with the following (all breaches of clear agreements made with the church organisation):

The organisers had invited a complete mix of people, in terms of engagement and levels of awareness and experience. They had given them a false expectation of the purpose of the workshop (letter about 'training for trainers'). We had no information in advance about the participants, not they of each other. (The latter remained as something of an obstacle throughout). There was no-one from the church organisation to accompany our process to attend to practicalities, no-one to record proceedings and write a report, no-one to take photos or slides, no-one to liaise with the centre or explain the house rules, no-one taking adequate care of the interpreters and interpretation, no-one to tell us we would have to vacate our room for the last two days, no-one to convene a worship group (the base-groups did an excellent job in the event and that arrangement was probably better than the one we had planned), no ready made chapel services twice-daily, no evening programme of speakers and videos (probably just as well). As George said, we were expected to perform a miracle and we did.'

**As I copy that from my journal, I recall the feeling that we had of being abused. The stress caused by the ever threatening chaos which resulted from these broken**

agreements was immense. It had considerable impact on the participants, translators and others, and the collected impact was felt by us.

As I stagger towards the end of this mammoth account, I observe learnings of many kinds. I think it possible, perhaps likely, that what was most instructive for me (and probably for the participants) was the process itself: the lived experience of playing that role within that group. I also, of course, received new information, saw the world through many new pairs of eyes, heard new and inspiring stories of human courage and compassion, generosity and pertinacity. I had an opportunity to re-evaluate the models and concepts we used and offered for use, and the processes for collective thinking and practising skills.

It is difficult to separate these different elements from each other; maybe unreal and therefore deceptive. The notion of respect seems ever more complex and illusive. Reflecting endlessly on the intricate dance of human relating, the layers upon layers of subtle motivation and effect, the continuous chain of action and interaction, brings with it a sense of confusion and disempowerment, as well as excitement.

But if I let go of the struggle to understand, I do understand that we were a group of people who went through a challenging, trying, exciting time together, in the midst of very busy and in some cases dangerous lives; who in spite of everything made a commitment to each other, kept to it, respected each other, took care of each other, and became one with each other. And this experience of building a community out of difference has, in the end, confirmed me in my tendency to hope.

On rereading this account, I am struck not only by its detail and length but by the number of layers of noticing, inquiring and reflecting that went into the writing of it, together with its subsequent framing and commentary. At each layer I am testing and questioning the meaning of what went on and of my own constructions and responses. I was in dialogue a great deal with George during and after each day of the workshop, and re-examined and reflected on that dialogue in my journal. That journal conversation was brought under scrutiny in the writing of my account, and that account in turn elicited more comments and questioning from my supervisor and colleagues. Now, as I come to the end of this presentation of the account to my reader, with further commentary added, I feel

that the thoroughness of my inquiry in relation to this workshop, relatively early on in my research process, while it may feel laboured, established for me some important habits of attention and reflection. It also provided me with a rich fabric of information about my own and others' behaviour and thinking, which has provided a backcloth -for subsequent workshops.

This week in Geneva gave me a great opportunity for testing, in a multicultural setting, much of the workshop content presented earlier, in Chapter Four, as well as the 'stages' diagram. The discussion about nonviolence and violence was important and challenging. But the overriding importance of the workshop, for me and it seemed for others, was that it brought together people of so many cultures in one experience and one discussion; that the experience was, for all its difficulties, a positive one, and that we seemed to have a discussion that had meaning for everyone, in spite of linguistic and cultural barriers.

One of the participants wrote a report for the organisers which describes events in much the way I remember and have described them. That (in addition to my conversations with George at the time) gives me some reassurance that my own subjectivity is not disconnected from the experience of others (at least one other) who were part of the workshop. What interests me most, however, is the way in which the report writer uses the 'stages' diagram to track the group's own journey, from a situation in which all kinds of conflicts lay beneath the surface, and power was an issue between us, through confrontation, to a kind of resolution, and a commitment to work together to maintain the community we had built. This mirrors my sense of the journey this group travelled. It also confirms my observation that the 'snake' model acted as a really useful frame for participants' thinking. At the same time it would seem to vindicate - or fulfil - the emphasis George and I placed in our opening session on the assumption that we would learn from our own experience of living with differences. This was an apparent success in experiential learning: one which has not always been matched in subsequent workshops.

The experience of facilitation, in a group of such powerful and varied individuals, with so many potential sources of conflict, provided me with an excellent context for self-examination and

learning as a facilitator. The power struggles which went on between facilitators and participants did not have a clear North-South dimension, though maybe that dimension was present, to some degree, in the discussion of nonviolence and the row about gender relations. This was a group where there were so many differences, that lines of division did not, on the whole, form clearly; and George and I between us 'represented' both South and North.

While so much about this workshop was positive, the shortcomings in its preparation and support, together with the lack of follow-up, raise the difficult question of responsibility in freelance work: where does it begin and end? Am I responsible for any failures in organisation, or is it my responsibility to try and compensate for them? Can I do other than try to do so? This question, like so many others, will recur in later accounts, including the next.

### **Later visits to Geneva**

As I explained at the beginning of this chapter, I was to return to the Geneva centre twice, at a time when I was not longer writing full-scale accounts. In September 1996, just over a year after my first workshop there, I went back to co-facilitate a second international workshop. This one constituted the major opening component of the centre's annual fourteen week 'Graduate School' for church people, both clergy and lay, from around the world. The theme for the 1996 course was 'Being an agent of God's peace'. I worked with an old friend and colleague whom I shall call Michael. The purpose of our introductory workshop, spread over six working days, was help build a learning community in the group of students (about twenty of them), and to introduce in a practical way (and so engage them with) some key aspects of conflict, peace and peace-making. The forty-five participants (the largest group I have ever worked with) came from the Far East, the Indian sub-continent, Africa, Latin America and Europe.

In the December I went back (without Michael this time) to help students to end the term as they had begun it: by relating the theme of the Graduate School, and now all the learning they had done, to their home situations, and to give them a chance to think about its application in their life and

work. I learned a great deal from my work with this group, and will use my journal notes here to present certain aspects and episodes from it which have been of particular significance for my ongoing learning.

I will begin with an episode which illustrates well the way in which a simple process (in this case asking participants to think about their own experiences of violence) can bring culture into question, enabling the participants to enter into their own debate without any facilitator intervention. This is what I wrote in my journal:

'On the second day of the September workshop, when we were thinking about different forms of violence, one group came up with 'cultural violence' as a category, and the reporter, a woman from Sierra Leone, gave the example of female genital mutilation as an example. At this a male participant from South Africa took the mike and said that maintaining cultural practices was an important way of fostering and affirming a sense of identity, especially in post-colonial Africa. The woman then strode back to the mike and declared that she could not accept that as a justification of violence against women: that culture could not be used as an excuse for oppressive practices.'

This exchange led to a rich, extended debate about culture in relation to fundamental values. Within this ecumenical Christian group it was clear that there was a higher - or deeper - frame of reference by which culture not only could but should, according to participants, be measured. However, beyond theological language, respect for life, needs and dignity were at the core of what was shared: values I encountered in every workshop. I have encouraged conversations about values in a variety of ways, as I explained in Chapter Four. These debates and explorations provide the ground for re-examining cultural assumptions: a process which is constantly challenging to me, as well as to participants.

During the same workshop, language again became an issue. In the first Geneva workshop it had been the Spanish speaking minority which became disaffected. This time it was the French speaking group. I will again quote from my journal:

'The question of minority rights has come up for me again here. The French-speaking participants (speaking French as a second or third language, that is) have felt severely disadvantaged and were quite disaffected on the first day. By paying a lot of attention - explicitly - to their needs, and acknowledging how hard things are for them, we have eased

their feelings and, to a degree, their practical difficulties: speaking more slowly, spending a lot of time in language groups, getting written materials translated, writing things up in French. They asked if I could sometimes facilitate plenaries in French. I hesitated. Maybe I could and should; but I felt pretty sure it would be too much for me [this had come up in Harare too] and I would fail everyone and exhaust myself utterly in the process, so I said no; which brings me to the critical question: How much disruption to, or drawing away from, overall needs should how many people be entitled to expect? It seems to me that 'rights', if the concept is useful, cannot be absolute, but relative; and in practice the balance between various need and rights is found by the active sensible and compassionate exercise of responsibility by everybody.

In this case, in a group where most are speaking and listening in a language not their own, most are experiencing difficulties of some degree. We are finding, as a group, ways of making this viable as a learning community. Some individuals are voluntarily working in French when English would be much easier for them; others are making the effort to speak more slowly; others still are translating for, and otherwise working to include, those who speak little English and no French. In these ways the linguistically powerful are working to use their power to divest themselves of some of it by sharing it.'

### **In my subsequent journal reflections I wrote:**

'Rereading these notes, I observe two things. One, that power contests can get in the way of coping, to everyone's detriment, whereas pragmatic co-operative, caring approaches can be pretty effective; two, that I regularly feel impatience towards French-speaking lobbies, and that this stems not only from a reaction to what sometimes seems like petulant behaviour, but from my own prejudice against the French (yes, really, I'm sorry to say), and my own liking for linguistic power and lack of sensitivity about it. How do I try to deal with this disrespect in myself - because I think I have at some level been aware of it? I try to behave respectfully: to acknowledge my advantage, thank people for the linguistic efforts they make and acknowledge their skill, ask people to tell me what I can do more helpfully, try to speak slowly and clearly. Sometimes, though, I know I forget, and play with words at the expense of clarity, or take advantage of my power to take control. That last one is hard, because it can be important for a facilitator to take power sometimes.'

My Geneva workshops were for Christians. At all of them games and worship were a vital part of the our process. (I realise that I think of play as a spiritual matter.) My temporary reintegration and emotional reabsorbtion into mainstream Christianity was on all three occasions a powerful experience. It brought with it a sense of loss, for the clear - if not simple - faith I had once had. The times of worship at the end of each day, at that first workshop with George, played an important role for participants in processing the challenges, insights and emotions or our sessions. The same was true for the workshops with the graduate school, as is shown by this journal entry from the beginning of the term:

'I had a very powerful sense, in chapel with them [the participants] this evening, that for all their immense differences, this group has, in a shared faith, a common language and frame for living and viewing the world. It made me feel the disintegratedness of having no such faith, as many of us in the West have not. What comes in the place of such a frame, if anything? I feel I live between two worlds in this respect.'

I made a similar journal entry when I returned at the end of that term.

'Our worship made a place for fear, grief, longing, anger and love; for hope and acceptance and trust. To see tiny Burmese Peter, with his wrinkled smiling face, addressing us [in English] on Jonah, while Yoru from the Ivory Coast, tall, strong, smooth-faced and confident, translated into French, paying minute attention to Peter's precise words and meaning, was to see enacted the transcendent community that Bossey is about and of which Peter spoke. When I feel overwhelmed by a sense of loss at leaving this group again, what am I really crying for?'

I shall return to the question of spiritual needs in my concluding chapters. Meanwhile, I will go back to June 1995, when I had another quite different opportunity for intercontinental exchange: one which at the time I was so tired I would have preferred to avoid. It proved, nonetheless, a wonderful occasion to learn from the reflections of experienced trainers from very diverse backgrounds, who yet shared a common commitment to nonviolent approaches in dealing with conflict and injustice.

## ISRAEL/ PALESTINE

The account which follows is self-explanatory, in that it includes a description of the nature and context of this cross-cultural gathering of trainers, and my participation and role in it. Like the first Geneva workshop, it will be reproduced in full and without change, apart from the addition of subheadings and one or two minor clarifications. It has a particular focus on self-care, as its title shows; but the wider learning from this workshop was immense. The account, like the journal notes on which it is based, is more generally discursive than the last, and does not describe events in such detail. It explores cultural approaches in relation to different themes, recording (sometimes in detail and at other times in outline) what was said by individuals and groups, and reflecting on these things. Among the ideas discussed is the notion of the separate self and individualism, as compared

with collectivist or communitarian perspectives. I explore some implications of these different perspectives for the concept of respect, and the way in which the philosophy of nonviolence embraces both.

I also reflect on the relationship between different ways of defining society and attitudes to retribution. I have garnered some insights into what is needed for reconciliation; into the connection between the idea of impunity and the restoration of community, and into the relationship between these issues and respect. The question of cultural evaluation came up, as it did in Geneva, and I describe conversations which helped me clarify my own thinking. I record some discussion on social conformity, and the suppression of personal views and feelings, in India, Sri Lanka and Nepal, and the criticism levelled against these cultural norms by the participants from those countries.

The Neve Shalom workshop, like the one in Geneva, was a living experiment in intercultural relations, and the possibility and difficulties of dealing respectfully with cultural differences and of finding common meaning. In this case the power dynamics of North-South relations constituted a specific and conflictual aspect of difference.

Reflections on the fundamental respectfulness (or not) of working cross-culturally as a trainer are intertwined with an attempt to come to terms with my own self-doubt, and I review my attitude towards Gandhian nonviolence. This seems to have been a time, on the whole, for me to make peace with myself and my work.

## **'REFLECTIONS ON AN INTERNATIONAL TRAINERS' GATHERING HELD IN**

### **ISRAEL IN JUNE 17 - 25 1995 - SELF-CARE AS STRUGGLE.**

#### **Background**

**Although the prospect of returning to Israel/Palestine held some excitement, I felt so tired and overwhelmed by work that I really did not want to go to this meeting, which**



was to last eight days and which I had undertaken to follow with two days' work with a group of young Palestinians. The venue for the gathering was to be the village of Neve Shalom/ Wahat al Salam (which I shall from now on abbreviate) - 'Oasis of Peace' - a community where Palestinians and Israelis live side by side and offer opportunities for young people from the either side of the divide to come together and learn about each other's experiences and perspectives.

The opportunity to stay in such a place and to meet with a group of people working on the same lines as me from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the USA and Europe might be expected to be irresistible. My reluctance came, I think, from some unprocessed feelings about unpaid work (which this was) and what I had come to regard as abusive dependence on committee members by paid staff of an organisation with which I am closely associated. It also came from the fact that I had, overall at that time, too much work, too much travel and too much on my mind.

This reluctance continued right up to my departure, and was compounded by my having a car accident two days before leaving, and by the news that the person most responsible for the gathering had withdrawn from participation, leaving even more unwanted responsibility with the committee [onto which I had been co-opted]. My response to this news was to feel even more overwhelmed, reluctant and, in the end, obliged to go. This dilemma I discussed with my research supervisor, the day before my flight, as well as with others close to me, and I resolved that I would go but would make a major effort at self-care while I was away, in particular arranging to pay for a room in the hotel at Neve Shalom, rather than sleeping, or trying to sleep, in a dormitory - since the car accident had left me exhausted by shock and with an unusually bad back, and I was very anxious about sleep. I also agreed with my supervisor that the focus for my research (and therefore record keeping) in Israel would be my respect for my own needs - thus reducing the weight of my research efforts, as well as focusing them.

#### **Self-care in practice: which self? Context and boundaries**

In the event, as I reported in my next supervision session, I ended up focusing on self-care, and keeping quite detailed records; but also on 'everything else', because I would have 'been a lunatic' not to use this unique opportunity for collecting material:

a time with fellow trainers and educators from all continents (apart from Australasia), brought together to talk about nonviolence, conflict resolution, reconciliation - everything germane to my research. This did, however, present me with a major 'self-care' challenge (and opportunity for intensive learning), since, in addition to my now extended research focus, I had to cope with my duties as a member of the planning group for the week, plus intensive discussions about the organisational crisis which had landed us with the additional responsibilities that we, as a planning group, were carrying. [Participation in the planning group was particularly stressful since I was painfully aware of its North-Western composition. I argued vigorously for changing it, to no avail, and at one point suggested to disgruntled participants from the South that they might propose taking over responsibility.] Furthermore, I chose to help with English-French translation, particularly in 'continental' sessions. Only two of the five participants from Africa had eventually been able to come, and they had no common language. Since I both wanted them to be able to work together and hoped to learn from their discussions, I volunteered to be their interpreter - which I found fascinating but very tiring.

As I reflected, and reflect, on all this, self-care takes on a very indistinct, or complicated, shape and meaning. Which self? My tired, fragile self? My researching self, excited by unique opportunities for discovery? My organisationally committed self, whose sense of integrity and self-respect requires the fulfilment of responsibilities - including those not willingly assumed but landed on me by default? My caring self, concerned for the load of others similarly placed? My concerned-for-the-world self, who wanted this event to be a success and everyone in it to benefit - and the world, in some small way? The self confused, embarrassed and challenged by my identity as a representative of the privileged North-West, with the power and choice that appears to give me? The concept and exercise of self-care seems, to say the least, problematic, in the face of such differing and competing selves and wants.

These wants emerged in relation to a particular context; a further question then raises itself. How could I ever have believed (if I ever did) that care for my tired, fragile self would be possible in such a context? How, for instance, could I have thought that I alone, in a group of life- and travel-worn people, could purchase for myself a private room in a separate building: an underrate of luxury in the eyes of most of the world, whatever the 'need'? How could I take a day off, as I had promised myself, while my equally exhausted colleagues struggled on? How could any of us

decide to take the holiday we really needed, when we had been brought together, at great expense, with other people's money, for a particular, other, purpose: one which we all shared? So we struggled together to find some kind of equilibrium, to combine some degree of care for ourselves as a group with attention to the business of our meeting; some measure of individual self-preservation with care for each other.

So it became clear to me that self-care cannot be done in isolation. Just as the self is not a fixed and single entity operating alone, but a complex and changing interdependent being, so self-care cannot be planned or enacted independently of the needs and care of others, or of the context in which all are situated. In the same way that self-respect and respect for others can be seen as interdependent, so a person who cares about others, and sees such caring as an important value in her/his life, will need to find forms of self-care that do not violate those feelings and that value. The context will play a major role in determining what is therefore feasible, so, where the context itself is a matter of choice, that may be where the choosing needs to happen.

In this particular context, which I had reluctantly chosen not to avoid, I did find many small areas of choice, where I was able to do self-preserving and assertive things - such as offering my notes for reading rather than go on interpreting when I was too tired; or missing a session in order to prepare something, rather than stay up late at night to do it. Even to make the effort to make such small choices was a struggle; and so the phrase 'self-care as struggle' has come to summarise my current view of this element in my research. The body, to maintain its equilibrium, must be constantly (albeit minutely) exercised in every muscle, according to its position and situation. In the same way I must be constantly balancing and adjusting my demands on myself and others in contexts where my multiple needs will be interacting with an infinity of other needs and considerations. Nonetheless - or perhaps all the more - I need to learn to give myself boundaries and make choices, if I am not to lose my bearings and my balance altogether. What can be positively framed as my openness to all possibilities can also leave me in danger of drowning in the multiplicity of my own and others' demands.

## Concepts of identity

The notion of the separate self, contained within the idea of self-care, and the emphasis on the individual, which is characteristic of Western culture, were thrown into relief for me at this gathering by the related and contrasting assumptions of other world views. The philosophy of nonviolence, albeit founded on ideas of community and mutual responsibility, insists on the absolute value of the individual human person. The United Nations declaration on human rights - that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights - which one Chilean participant described as the secular basis for nonviolence, upholds this absolute value: one which is central to my idea of respect. But the individual, recognised, as far as I know, in any culture as a unit, must be understood in some kind of social context, as a component of another unit or units, and this contextual unit may, in some cultures, be more important than the individual.

One striking feature of the continental presentations, made in plenary sessions after continental group work, was the recurrent incapacity of the Europeans to produce any kind of synthesis of their discussions, so that they were obliged to offer an assortment of individual viewpoints. (This might have applied also to the US group, but there were only two North American participants, who worked together regularly, so their task was much easier.) Participants from other continents were struck by this fragmentation and, as it seemed to me from their reactions, felt it to be in keeping with the perceived self-preoccupation and social deficiencies of Westerners and their culture - in itself the mark of some failure in respect for others.

The Latin American participants spoke constantly of 'the people'. This concept carried powerful emotional overtones and seemed to have motivating force for their extremely well-organised and courageous work. 'The people' were clearly felt to be bound together, often in common suffering, in endurance, resilience and the capacity to celebrate life even in the face of death: thus deeply respected as an entity. The word 'solidarity' described both the firmness of this unity and the will and moral determination by which it was maintained. Dictators and those who worked for them, being by definition separate from 'the people,' were not included in this deep and spontaneous respect - though ultimately nonviolence could not exclude them.

## **Community and reconciliation; personal freedom and social harmony**

**In discussion concerning the concept of reconciliation, and what it could mean in practice, the Latin American contribution was based on this 'option for the people' (my phrase; cf liberation theology and 'option for the poor'), together with the idea of 'community'. The question of impunity has been the focus for bitterness and anger in Chile and elsewhere, since the relatives of the 'disappeared' have seen those responsible for the murder of their sons and husbands continue in their positions of power, while they are left without information or redress, and the dead are not honoured. One participant described reconciliation as rebuilding community, or people's capacity to live together. The community which was rebuilt had to include in some way those who had been part of it and had been killed, 'the ones who were together': their memories had to be respected, honoured. Furthermore, community had to be based on ethical values, which had to be 'revalued' for the community to be rebuilt. The 'false reconciliation' proposed by the government in Chile was based not on such values but on economic and political expediency, and failed to respect 'the absent ones' or to include them in any way.**

**In addition, those who had transgressed against society were, he said, traditionally required to offer something back to society before they could be reintegrated. Under the 'impunity' proposals, this would not be done. This last point is, to me, particularly interesting, since from this perspective to require some form of reparation can be seen as more respectful towards the culprits than to ignore their crime. It is to offer them the possibility of re-inclusion. This is a far more positive approach than a simple demand for retribution. Whether it is current in mainstream Latin American culture I do not know, but it is clearly consonant with an emphasis on community and 'the people', as well as with nonviolence.**

**Retribution is, according to our participants from Uganda and Niger, a powerful reflex in their African cultures. The Ugandan said that in his society physical violence is quickly resorted to and provokes a violent response. In Niger, in the strongly hierarchical village unit, when there is conflict within the community, patience is enjoined on individuals and families, and the edicts of the chief, often punitive in content, are respected absolutely. But if an outsider transgresses, retribution can be swift and violent - as it was for the man who walked across someone else's piece of land and had his fingers summarily chopped off and presented to him in his hat.**

From my outside perspective, this seems a shockingly restricted view of community and an unacceptably limited understanding of who is worthy of respect; but my African friends convinced me that the Latin American concept of 'the people' (or indeed of 'civil society') had no meaning in their societies and that tribal and clan loyalties were paramount - so that, for instance, someone finding himself in government has an unquestionable obligation to use his office to promote the interests of his own tribe and bestow favours on its members. According to our participant from Niger, 'The African does not exist as an individual or as part of a political structure, but as part of a family and a tribe. It would be very dangerous to try to get out of those units. A person would have to go right away. Dictatorial systems which favour a politician's own group are inevitable in that context.' (Which confirms my understanding that Western political systems are dangerously unsuitable in many parts of Africa. See Hiskias Assefa's discussion of this in 'Peace and Reconciliation as a Paradigm', 1993). Traditional processes and rituals for reconciliation after conflict are designed to restore proper relations within the tribal unit and public dignity to the victims, with face-saving procedures for the different parties, using a (literal) scape-goat as the deflector or absorber of retribution.

Where personal individuality is not a core value, cultural conformity is proportionally more important. According to our participant from Nepal, in her culture the individual is regarded as interdependent with others, and the community or collective identity is of great importance. Maintaining harmony within the community is vital. Asian participants agreed that in their societies the public expression of individual emotions is not acceptable. This inevitably leads to the suppression of feelings which arguably (from the point of view of these participants) would be better expressed. Women in Nepal, for example, are told that 'a good woman will never complain.' Cultural norms linked with discrimination have a negative impact on young men in India, too, who are not allowed to have a say in family life and as a consequence are often angry and alienated.

### **Evaluating culture**

The customary suppression of feelings could be seen as useful (and is no doubt so understood) in the preservation of social harmony; but when it is combined with

strong ethnic and religious loyalties and what are, apparently, universal human passions, suppression may often lead to explosion. I feel free to conclude that Western individualism, though at its best it may be combined with a sense of social care and responsibility, often results in gross selfishness, exploitation and social disintegration; but I find it more awkward to take a critical view of other cultures whose values and mechanisms I do not fully understand.

From what emerged in our discussions in Israel, and from my own subsequent reflections, I conclude that all cultures are likely to have elements which are both positive and negative in their effect. The value given to patience in Niger helps people cope with relentlessly harsh conditions; it also encourages passivity in the face of gross oppression, including slavery. The strong social cohesion within the tribe and village, the value given to belonging, also finds expression in violent hostility to outsiders. 'Respect', in many cultures, including my own, can signify not only profound valuing and caring, but what to me seems an arbitrary and often misplaced appeasement of those in authority for reasons of gender, age, position or other hierarchical indicator. To me, Western individualist that I am, social norms are destructive (that is decrease overall levels of human health and happiness), if they fundamentally contradict that UN declaration that 'all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and in rights' - and if my respect for other people and their cultures prevented me from affirming that, it would have become counter-productive.

It appeared to me that all of us at Neve Shalom were working both with and against our own cultures, trying to find the values within them that were consonant with our own deepest beliefs and aspirations, and to build on those values, feeling free to distinguish between their healthy and unhealthy application, dreaming of a future in which relationships and attitudes were transformed, constituting amongst us a culturally varied counter-culture. Respecting the everyday customs and symbols of a people, where they do not contravene any overriding value we may hold, can be regarded as a normal expression of respect; but the pedagogy of nonviolence, a pedagogy of liberation, is likely to encourage challenge, inviting students or participants to discover their own profound aspirations and then to examine their culture and identify the values and practices within it which on the one hand tend towards nonviolent behaviour and relationships, and on the other militate for violence and get in the way of peace and justice. As Monique from Niger remarked, 'There is something liberating in discovering the limitations of one's own culture.'

People are often oppressed by something in their culture but can't say so and it's a liberation when they do.' In her educational work, this moment of liberation was often reached through theatre, the spectators seeing in a new light things which in every day life they had taken for granted.

This view of the liberating role of education was shared across the continents represented at our gathering, and seen as both an individual and a community matter. Monique claimed to have spent a large part of her life recovering from her 'education' in France, which had crushed and fundamentally disrespected her. In Niger she had worked with teachers to help them discover how to work in co-operative and enabling ways with their very large classes, rather than by harsh discipline and control, and spoke of the joy and energy released by these new relationships. Educators from Sri Lanka, India and Nepal, working mainly with women and children, talked of the need to restore people's sense of self-respect and autonomy, and the idea that they had something to contribute. Participants from Ecuador and Brazil saw the restoration of self-respect as essential to the changing of anti-social behaviour, and the process of 'conscientisation' through education as the key to the rightful enactment of political power by the people. Nonviolence educators from North America and Europe, owing much to Gandhi and to the liberation theology and pedagogy of Latin America, also described training in terms of enabling both personal change and social action.

Monique likened the educational process to the opening of a fan. This opening inevitably involved the challenge which came with new levels of awareness; for instance, the challenge to distinguish between facts and feelings; to refuse simplifications and demonisations and disrespect for other castes; to recognise the part played by history, but to see that it is history, and turn to the present; to recognise one's own part in a conflict. Challenging people of another culture requires great sensitivity and a capacity for self-awareness and self-criticism. We need to acknowledge clearly the negative aspects and effects of our own culture - and be open to challenge ourselves - if we are to question the customs and assumptions of others. In the (culturally laden) context of a training workshop we are working by invitation with people who are there by choice, in a participatory process which requires openness of a kind unusual in most cultures. What is important is that participants should have sufficient advance information about the workshop for that choice to be a real one.



One particularly difficult and important form of challenge which Monique and I discussed was the questioning of the kind of analysis not uncommon in post-colonial countries which lays all blame for, for instance, bloody conflict or corrupt government, at the door of history and the West. The colonial powers have much to answer for; but as long as the people of those post-colonial countries see themselves only as victims, they are refusing to accept not only their own responsibility in the present, but their power to change things for the future.

#### **Intercultural dynamics: power in relationships; confronting differences**

Challenging behaviour between individuals and groups can cause damaging conflict; but without risking the inevitably challenging expression of differences, we have to limit our interactions in a stultifying way, or else violate our own integrity. This gathering, like the seminar I co-facilitated for the church organisation last summer, began with a no doubt unconscious emphasis on commonalties - though those of us who had planned it had built in continental sessions from an early stage. It was our purpose to discover not only what were the aspects of our life and work which united us, but the things that were specific to particular individuals or regions, and the differences in experience, perspective and emphasis, which could amount to disagreement, as well as leading to enlargement of understanding.

As the week progressed, participants from the South and East began to find a unified voice, defined mostly by their relationship to the North and West. At the same time, differences between their own continental perspectives became increasingly apparent. There were also some potentially quite difficult issues between individuals in relation to plans for our party on the final evening - differences over alcohol and money. Perhaps because we had set out to create a group ethos in which differences were seen as interesting and useful to look at, these minor frictions generated no major conflict or ill will; nor did the quite justifiable rumblings against the North Western weighting of the planning group generate enough energy for the take-over I had encouraged. But the surfacing of these differences, for instance in one long simulation exercise, was important for the deepening of our knowledge of each other and our understanding of the challenges entailed in any attempt to develop a multi-cultural understanding of nonviolence and conflict resolution.

One member of the Neve Shalom/ Wahat al Salam community (an Israeli), who was a participant in our group, described her educational work with Palestinian and Israeli youngsters. She said that at the beginning of their stay at the centre they, especially the Israelis, would be eager to emphasise their sameness, reluctant to acknowledge differences. In this situation the Israelis would, reflecting political relationships, tend to dominate. But as time went on, the differences would begin to emerge, and separate group work would provide the opportunity for their elaboration, so that eventually, through tension and conflict, participants would reach a greater understanding of each other's reality, power relations would change, and a deeper meeting point would be reached. All of which echoes our experiences in Geneva and confirms my understanding of respect as requiring an acknowledgement of differences and the exercise of challenge.

#### **Culture and values**

Much of our discussion during the week centred on the values necessary to nonviolent relationships and community. 'Respect' was perhaps the value most frequently mentioned, and, for Latin American participants and for those of us who came from North America and Europe, 'justice' went with it. The participant from Ecuador spoke of the necessity to respect and meet young people's basic human needs if they were to grow up as respectful members of society. The Chileans were concerned with human rights at all levels: emotional, political and economic. Although I do not recall hearing the word 'justice' used by the Asians, it was implicit in much of what they said. Anna from Sri Lanka had a passionate concern that the equal dignity of all citizens should be respected in the treatment they received in society, regardless of their religion, caste or ethnicity. Mary's work with Indian women was designed to encourage a sense of self-worth, together with a knowledge of personal rights and increased economic power. Sarah from Nepal was concerned to help women and tribal peoples in her country to emerge from oppression. The oppressive nature of tribal structures was a major theme in relation to Niger. And throughout our conversations about reconciliation and its requirements, questions of justice and restoration recurred.

The concept of justice and themes of empowerment and liberation struggle are central to the tradition of nonviolence, but they are often absent from the discourse of 'conflict resolution'. To me it seems clear that 'struggle' and 'resolution' are not, or should not be, competing approaches to violence and conflict, but ideally different phases or options expressing one approach, both founded on the value of respect. A concern to articulate the relationship between the two, and the importance of power relations was what prompted the development of the 'snake' model. It seems to me important that 'conflict resolution' not be confused, in theory or practice, with pacification, as opposed to the search for genuine peace: peace with justice.

#### **My own values and beliefs: doubt and acceptance**

Before I went to Israel my challenging (and Judi's) of my 'martyr syndrome' had taken me into a fundamental crisis of belief about nonviolence. The philosophy as I had received and incorporated it was based on Biblical ideas of 'the suffering servant' and the redemptive power of suffering and self-sacrifice. Having always been worried and impressed by Jesus' call to perfection (which I had latterly tried to mitigate by thinking of it in its Latin sense of 'completion'), I had been troubled by recent reading which asserted that Gandhi considered his life's mission to have failed because of a lack of purity. I had begun to feel that any recipe for life that required purity was doomed to failure, and that to be realistic, indeed compassionate, it was necessary to accept human beings as they are, be less stern and exacting. I had recalled a quotation from Bertolt Brecht,

'Even the hatred	
	of squalor
Makes the brow	
	grow stern.
Even anger against	
	injustice
Makes the voice	
	grow harsh.
	Alas we
Who wished to lay	
the foundations of	

**kindness**

**Could not**

**Ourselves be kind.'**

**- only I wanted to add, 'to ourselves'.**

**I was afraid that when I met up with colleagues in Israel I would find I no longer shared in the beliefs of what had been for so long my family of belief, would be repelled by their too demanding enthusiasm. In the event I felt none of these things, only encouragement to think that good things were possible, and (from my journal)**

**'a conviction that we need more kindness, love, laughter, courage, and that it's still me to want to be part of that, even when it's a struggle; but not to the point of sternness: including myself in kindness and tolerance, seeing my weaknesses as a chance for someone else's strength, myself as a possible part of an 'answer', not the sole provider, one in a billion carriers, not *the* carrier.'**

**As I think and write about these questions, with all my self-doubts and doubts, I feel that I do have a contribution to make in this field, both as a practitioner and a thinker. I also realise that what I have to offer (which is myself) cannot be other than a product of my own culture, with all its assumptions, biases and limitations. When I work as a trainer, I do so by invitation, in a 'workshop' - a particularly sub-cultural invention - and I can only assume that those I work with will choose their own level of participation, and reject any ideas of mine that they find unhelpful.**

**A particular moment in one lunchtime conversation helped me in my struggle for self-acceptance. It was a three way conversation, between me, a German and an Indian. We were discussing cultural sensitivity and respect. The Indian described an encounter with a Palestinian in which he had been unsure of the meaning of something the other had said - and furthermore unsure whether it would be acceptable to ask for clarification. I very tentatively asked him whether it would have been possible for him to explain his dilemma to the Palestinian - at which the German exclaimed, 'That sounds very English!' 'Of course it's very English,' I retorted. 'I am English'. Then the Indian said slowly, 'Yes, I think I could have done that. I wish I'd thought of it.' As a matter of fact, I do not think that what I had suggested was very English. What matters is that I, being myself English, had had an idea to offer which seemed useful across cultures.**

It has come to me also that my own tendency to self-doubt is something I probably should simply accept as part of who I am and one which can be useful, protecting me, and therefore others, from over-confidence, or arrogance - cultural or otherwise, and lack of self-challenge. Combined with the passion that I feel, it seems to make for real communication. For instance, when at the end of our week together I went to lead a workshop with young Palestinians, I was so afraid of seeming to underestimate their suffering or offer simplistic 'solutions,' yet so deeply hoping that a way forward was possible, that I presented what I had to offer in such a way that they really welcomed it and engaged with it - and asked for more.

Eva Hoffman, in her autobiographical book, 'Lost in Translation', (1991: 276) having given a profound and detailed account of the personal impact of migration from one culture and one language to another, concludes that there is an essence within the individual which lies beyond culture: 'This is the point to which I have tried to triangulate, this private place, this unassimilable part of myself. We all need to find this place in order to know that we exist not only within culture but also outside it.' This makes sense to me, rings true. I want to feel comfortable within that place myself; and is it possible that one of the most powerful and important things that training can do is to help participants discover that place for themselves? Is it also possible that communication at a profound level can take place between people even of very different cultures, if they can speak or otherwise communicate from and to that place? More specifically, can respect, if it comes from the heart, make itself felt even without words, or in spite of the wrong ones, or other cultural blunders? Is it something beyond concepts and words and world views?

I ask these questions not to excuse wanton ignorance or carelessness, or the failure to look for local partners to work with when one is working outside of one's own cultural context: only to express the profound but tentative hope, or still more tentative belief, that there really is such a thing as 'our common humanity', which can be felt, and which can both generate respect and make its communication possible.

Cross-cultural (and counter-cultural) conflict resolution (or nonviolence) training is bound to involve conflict at some level - the uncomfortable effects of one way of seeing or doing things clashing with another. In my understanding, conflict is a

**normal and potentially productive part of life whereby we learn and change. So it is with training. A facilitator of learning should not be afraid of conflict per se - including cultural conflict; but she or he should be aware of the impact of power relations and take care not to abuse the 'trainer' position. For me, so far in my research, 'respect' holds good, both as a core theme and value for those wishing to approach conflict nonviolently, and as a focal point for cultural differences and dilemmas. It also seems the litmus test and only real safeguard for acceptable cross-cultural training.'**

### **Summary of the contribution of these intercontinental workshops to my research**

These workshops in Switzerland and Israel/ Palestine, because of the wide range of cultures that were represented in them, gave me a great deal of relevant experience and stimulus for my research. They revealed interesting and important aspects of cultural difference and, particularly in the case of the second workshop, brought into focus the part played by history and power relations in intercultural dynamics, and the consequent difficulty of establishing relationships of mutual respect. In both workshops, in different ways, questions of power were played out in matters of control and decision making.

In the first Geneva workshop, as well as experiencing some real challenges to my groundedness and respect as a facilitator, I had an ideal opportunity to test my justice-peace, ANV-CR theoretical 'package' (which I used again in the Graduate School). In Israel, in a group already committed to nonviolent struggle for justice, my theoretical learning was in the area of reconciliation: how it is understood and what it requires from different cultural viewpoints.

In both situations, organisational gaps created unintended pressure, which provided the stimulus for an exploration of the limits of personal choice and responsibility. In Geneva, working with George had helped me to see these things in perspective. In Israel, I had gone with the intention of learning about the exercise of self-care, and had learned a great deal about the complexity and difficulties; but I had also learned a great deal about self-acceptance, and had managed somehow to position

myself in the world. This was, I think reflected in the more relaxed, exploratory style of my account.

In Geneva, cultural differences made themselves felt, and at the same time were transcended by the shared culture of Christianity. At Neve Shalom there was no common religion, but, as I now realise, a shared commitment to the philosophy of nonviolence played a comparable transcultural role. The workshops in my next chapter were, in terms of participants, less culturally diverse, but brought together people with no equivalent unifying commitment, and with much political cause for division.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### WORKING WITH SPECIFIC CONFLICTS

I will now go back a little, to the latter part of 1994. The Autumn was spent on report writing in relation to the first Geneva workshop and on various pieces of facilitation work in the UK. My next experience of cross-cultural training was in Beirut, in December that year. Unlike the Geneva workshops and the trainers' gathering in Israel/Palestine, this training was planned for participants from a single country: one with a history of conflict, in a region of conflict.

It is not necessary to be in a multi-cultural group to experience friction. There are certain patterns in group dynamics which seem to apply rather generally. In this case the cultural differences were between trainers and participants, not between the participants themselves. Nonetheless, there were matters of conflict between participants, of a politico-religious nature.

The research tasks I set myself for this workshop in Lebanon were related not to the nature of the group or to the conflict of which they were part, but to two of the questions raised in my first Geneva account: the idea of lightness and gravity (with George showing me that a more relaxed approach is possible), and to facilitator and participant roles and relationships. I think my supervisor had suggested I might look at what could be an exaggerated sense of responsibility. These are my words, not hers, and probably I have overstated what she said. Whatever her words, I recognised something about myself that I was eager to address. I planned in this round of enquiry to focus on my attitude to success and failure. I am prone to see all that falls short of perfection as a disaster, and I wanted to find a better sense of balance. This would entail discovering a way of being discriminating in my evaluation of feedback, knowing what to take seriously and what to set aside. Secondly, I wanted to monitor the way I fulfilled my role as facilitator, aiming to respect my responsibility and function, and at the same time respecting the participants; in particular riding lightly the kind of teacher-pupil power struggle which had gone on in Geneva, and had eventually resolved itself so satisfactorily.



After the workshop, I wrote a brief evaluation for the organisation that had employed me to do this work, and then a research post-script. The report was quite open (that is, not guarded), but focused on external aspects of the workshop, rather than on my more inward and personal inquiry questions. In it I discussed different aspects of the workshop, looking at them from some distance, relatively dispassionately, indicating what I thought were important considerations for the organisation. The research post-script adds a more personal layer of reflection which goes beyond the particular event, making wider connections and weaving what had taken place and what I had noticed in Beirut into the process of my inquiry at different levels.

Both the report and the research post-script were written soon after the event, largely from memory, with the help of the few journal notes I had made. I shall reproduce them both in full. They reflect, I think, the more relaxed approach I had aimed to take.

#### **'EVALUATION OF BEIRUT TRAINING, DECEMBER 4 - 10 1994**

##### **Size and nature of the participant group**

**The regular attendance of around twenty-five NGO representatives provided a group of perhaps ideal size, maximising the learning opportunity without interfering with its quality.**

**The mix of religious groups represented was quite heavily weighted towards Islam, though within that category there was diversity, with Sunnis, Shiites and Druze. Maybe had there been a stronger Christian contingent, the discussion which finally took place about sectarianism would have been engaged in sooner and more strongly.**

**The different approaches of the purely humanitarian and the more political organisations probably blunted or diffused the focus of the group's work. On the other hand, it was maybe important that such a range of NGOs was represented, in view of our desire to promote understanding of the nature of 'civil society' and strengthen its cohesion.**

## **Location and facilities**

**Being in a beautiful spot away from distractions was a great benefit. The accommodation was fine, the simultaneous translation worked remarkably well and the food was excellent! The cold of the first days was certainly difficult, but soon forgotten once the central heating was on and the sun came.**

## **Training content**

**Our attempt to incorporate a variety of outside elements - films, panels, guest speakers - although in the end we were able to limit them, was a confusing factor in agenda planning and on occasion led to overload. Our first day was, to my mind, less clear in form and purpose than it could have been, though much of the declared confusion came, I think, from the insecurity of the group and the different expectations of participants. Given the overall shortage of time for the ground we wished to cover, maybe the pace of the first day could have been smarter - though as I write, I feel the necessity for allowing initial space for manoeuvring and settling.**

**The programme was too packed for comfort overall, and the 'need' to include the range of elements agreed between the organisers and local partners imposed a streamlined and therefore somewhat monotonous set of processes at times: not an ideally varied range of activities and exercises. The attention we gave to the problem solving stage of conflict resolution was inadequate.**

**However, it seemed clear as we neared the end of the week that participants felt they had discovered much that was new, and that we had opened up what was, for many, a completely fresh approach which they considered highly relevant to their work and situation. Their engagement with all that was offered was lively and constant, including their engagement with us as trainers.**

### **Changing dynamic within the group**

The group transformed itself, in the course of six days, from a collection of somewhat suspicious and querulous individuals into a real community, full of warmth and affirmation. Having spent most of the week avoiding the real issues among and between them, in the last couple of days they began to discover the possibility of real communication. It seemed clear to me that the move from a competitive, 'own agenda' style of interaction to a more mutually attentive, open and co-operative one was a big shift for many of them, and that that was the final (partial, of course) breakthrough within the group and within individual members of it.

### **Team work of organisers and trainers**

The strained relationship between the staff members of the two organisations, while it made for a somewhat tense atmosphere at times, did not prevent the smooth running of the workshop, which was very well provided for and managed - leaving the three trainers free to do their work of planning and facilitation. The three of us worked remarkably comfortably together, considering our different personal styles and backgrounds. I think that we were able to help set a relaxed and open tone for the sessions and that our willingness to be different, albeit hard for some participants to understand, offered a model of openness and complementarity which was healthy, if culturally challenging.

### **Conclusion**

Overall I consider we fulfilled the workshop's purposes of promoting constructive approaches to conflict within and between Lebanese NGOs and encountered by them in their work. Plans being made by many participants as the workshop ended to meet again to reflect and build on their learning and to make plans for building interorganisational co-operation were evidence that the further aim of promoting such connections had been met. How long lasting or far reaching the workshop's effects will be we cannot tell - though we can make some future enquiries. We sowed and watered some seeds together. The people who live there will now do what they can with them.

### **Personal comment**

**I am grateful to the organisation for this opportunity to learn more about the challenges and benefits of cross-cultural training. Questions of language and interpretation, so closely related to cultural concepts and norms, were, not for the first time, prominent in our discussions and provide much food for continuing reflection. As usual, I also learned a great deal from my fellow trainers. Thanks all round.**

### **RESEARCH POST SCRIPT**

**I believe the tone and content of this evaluation, written for my employers, accurately reflect the more relaxed approach I managed to take to this workshop - as a survival measure in the face of expected and real tensions and work load, and in response to my growing awareness of my tendency to be over-demanding and critical of myself. I have admitted gaps and miscalculations without agonies of self-blame and I have recognised our achievements. As I reflect on it all a month later, I feel I did well in maintaining my equilibrium during the week. I recall feelings of diffidence and inadequacy at the beginning of our team planning; a sense, too, of being treated as something less than an equal by my two academic male colleagues: a sense which may have been nothing more than a projection of my own feelings onto them. However, as we moved from planning into action (and also, I admit, [what I saw as] the limitations of one of my colleagues became increasingly apparent), I experienced my own ability with the group and in the planning and put away my reticence.**

**What I observe at this distance about respect, as it was absorbed as a value and experienced within the group, is that what was of most importance was the move from a kind of formal, wary observing of its theoretical requirements, and those of etiquette, to a real recognition of the other as being made of the same flesh and blood: *essentially* the same, the differences being secondary. Such recognition, in a society where identity is defined first and foremost in terms of the thing which**

divides (religion), in terms of differences which have been the pretext for war, is quite a breakthrough.

About respect and the sharing of responsibility between participants and trainers: at one point some participants were complaining that we had not yet addressed the most serious and central conflicts of the region. I was facilitating at the time and my response was clear: that we had continually invited them to work on the issues that most concerned them and that they had chosen to avoid them. It was up to them and they still had two days left. I felt good then and do so now to have been so clear. I was both restating the sharing of responsibility and playing my own responsible part as challenger and framework provider. The response of the group was to accept the challenge and take on their responsibility and use the opportunity of the remaining two days to engage with each other on difficult issues which they now had the trust and the courage to address.

Thinking now about my own role and strengths generally as a trainer, and going by feedback from participants and colleagues, I think I do a good job with conceptual explanations and frameworks, being clear and cogent and holding participants' attention well. One colleague also told me that I have a way of saying value-related and philosophical things with emotional and motivational content in a way which is not mawkish but strong. I like that. I consider that values base to be at the heart of my work. What I mean to do is to be open about myself and my own outlook, while not imposing it on others.

In spite of differences in culture, the more places I work, the more I feel the language of the heart is a common language. Winning respect and building trust is also a task of the facilitator. We took this group, at times haltingly, from distance and mistrust to community.

We did, however, run into linguistic difficulties in Beirut. The Arabic translation for 'power' has to be either 'authority' or 'strength'. My definition, on this occasion, was the ability to affect something, to make a difference - and there is no Arabic word for power in that sense. This linguistic difficulty was also an opportunity for a more thorough and intense exploration of meaning than might otherwise have taken place.

**I am interested to find that my recollections of the thoughts, feelings and interactions of our time in Beirut are still vivid with me, despite my lack of journal notes. I have always had a good memory for things which really engaged me - though for nothing else. I conclude that the degree of recall I am now experiencing is enhanced by the new level of awareness in and after action which I am increasingly achieving. This also means that I need not, in order to continue my research, impose on myself tremendously taxing journalling duties in the midst of already taxing work. Hurray!'**

Re-reading these two pieces, I sense a growing confidence in my own abilities and judgement. I had also added to learning from previous workshops about the part played by language, and about group dynamics. And I had clearly discovered, once again, that overloaded agendas and time management were a problem. There were new things, too. This was the first time that I had had participants who wanted to be *given* case studies from their own situation, rather than readily embracing the opportunity to develop their own. (Although this was the first time, it was not the last. See Harare account in Chapter Eight.) I think in Beirut the reluctance came from wariness about taking on the responsibility - and the risk - of opening up their own conflictual politics within the group. I have experienced this reluctance in more recent work in Croatia and Romania, and realise I have begun to take a more proactive line in response to such reticence. I shall discuss this later, in Chapter Nine.

The closing remarks of my evaluation reflect both my concern for the usefulness of these workshops, and what I consider to be realism about the degree of responsibility we could take for that. When I read now that 'we took' the group 'from distance and mistrust to community', I recognise a pattern which pleases me; but I also feel some unease. It sounds patronising and self-congratulatory, as if I were taking credit for what the participants did - or as if we the facilitators had manipulated them into doing it. I also mistrust the pattern a little, or at least want not to take it for granted. I realise that if (as I remarked at the end of my first Geneva account) we had stayed together longer in Beirut, new conflicts would have arisen - and healthily so. Yet I do find that in groups prepared to wrestle with what divides them, there is usually an eventual move to affirmation of what unites.

In a similar vein, I remember that my chosen phrase, 'the language of the heart', seemed to my supervisor to verge on the mawkish. I feel that now, but have as yet found no other way of saying what I mean: that there seems to be a level of quite deep understanding possible between people, even where the language of words and culture are no means of communication.

I said when I explained my methodology that I had aimed to evaluate feedback openly, but not to be too eager to abandon my own position. Maintaining that balance has not been and is not too easy. I am both opinionated and diffident (or insecure). In relation to this particular question about emotion and language, I am not yet sure of my own ability to distinguish the line (if there is one) between sentiment and feelings which should be honoured (which stand up to the challenges of reason and experience, and provide useful energy and will). This uncertainty in me makes the evaluation of feedback difficult. On the other hand, I have recognised a need to use language with greater precision; and maybe that is the route to checking the content of what I am trying to say.

In Beirut the sense of community which was created within the group emerged through a process which began with considerable tension. This tension had, I believe, two main sources: suspicion and resistance on the part of the participants towards the European-American team, and suspicions between the participants themselves, not to mention the conflict on the side between the two organisers. The tension between participants and facilitators was, like the hostility between the Western and Eastern organisers which probably augmented it, connected to ideas about neo-colonialism. I was very much aware of this, and maybe exaggerated it, because I was in the Lebanon for the first time, and therefore especially aware of my own ignorance. In this the Beirut workshop differed substantially from the workshop I shall describe next.

## WORK WITH GROUPS FROM FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

My next workshop was for people from a region with which I was relatively familiar. Several of the participants were known to me or to colleagues, and I think there was no tension or resistance

between them and me. However, like the participants in the Beirut workshop, although they came from what had been till recently one country, they were not from one action group (as with the work I had done in Belgrade) or one ethnicity, so that intergroup tensions could be expected to make themselves felt within the workshop. In the first of these two 'former Yugoslavia' workshops, participants did however share a quite profound commitment to interethnic respect and co-existence, and were already engaged in work for peace, most being trainers themselves. Like the Israel gathering, this was not a training workshop, but a meeting for trainers and educators from different parts of former Yugoslavia, who came together to exchange ideas, skills, techniques and problems. It was held at an educational centre established with the support of the Austrian Government, for the training of 'peacekeepers and peacemakers.'

I was there as one of the few resource people from countries outside former Yugoslavia, representing the committee which had organised the meeting. Since this was not an event at which I expected to play a training or facilitator role, I did not regard it, at the time, as a research cycle, though I maintained my journalling habit, and the piece I wrote about it afterwards was produced in the first instance for myself and for my colleagues on the committee which sponsored the event. I will include these reflections because I think they are not very different in tone or content from what I would have written for my research alone; by this time inquiry had become a habit for me. The committee likewise has an action learning remit, and the issues raised in what I wrote were important for our collective thinking and working, as well as for me in my research. I conclude with some ideas about guidelines for the kind of training we as a committee would want to offer: ideas which reflect some of the elements which I consider important if training interventions are to meet the requirements of respect in terms of usefulness. Here, then, is my report.

#### **'SOME REFLECTIONS ARISING FROM THE SCHLAINING EXCHANGE MEETING**

**The idea of this meeting for trainers and educators, to exchange ideas, skills, techniques and problems, came with much enthusiasm from participants in the Budapest evaluation meeting eighteen months earlier. The original convenor fell ill**



and it was a year later that the idea was reformulated by Committee members and correspondents at a European conference on peace and conflict resolution meeting.

During the two planning meetings held on that occasion, it was emphasised by those from outside former Yugoslavia, with the apparent concurrence of those from within, that this proposed gathering was primarily for the 'insiders', and that they should play the main role in selecting participants from within the region; also deciding which outside trainers should be invited, and consulting with relevant groups in their region about the content of the meeting's agenda. The outside trainers were to be limited to five, as against thirty from inside, and they were to be there as friends, colleagues, co-learners and, if appropriate, resource people.

With hindsight it is apparent that we were not sufficiently clear as to who would actually draw up the agenda or facilitate the sessions. Suffice it to say that, when we gathered in Schlaining, I, for the Committee, was anxious not to assume control and that most if not all the participants from within former Yugoslavia assumed that it was the task of the outside trainers to run things. In the void created by these conflicting expectations, the convenors from Belgrade and Osijek came together with me, at my request, to consider how we might get the show on the road. During the first evening we collected needs and offers for the agenda's content, then stayed up, exhausted, till after midnight, trying to collate and categorise them and find a pattern to build the agenda.

After an explanation from me about how the Committee and outside trainers saw - and did not see - their role, and a somewhat shaky first morning session, things got underway, with pairs of trainers (one insider and one outsider) volunteering to run different sessions; but at lunch time the two insider convenors and I expressed our exhaustion and desire to be relieved of our unwelcome load and were immediately succoured, temporarily relieved and permanently augmented by other planners and facilitators. From then on we swam along together in an efficiently structured-and-ad-hoc manner. This hard-won co-responsibility was one of the things most appreciated in the final evaluation, as an analogue for the work of mutual empowerment we were all engaged in.

This struggle and its outcome have given me much food for reflection - on assumptions, perceptions, communication and the lack of it, and the difference

between dependency and imperialism on the one hand and the desire for a rest and some useful input on the other! What had felt by the outside trainers to be sensitive and respectful had been seen by the others as something approaching dereliction of duty.

One further episode did, however, make me feel we had, as a committee, been on the right track in wanting to place responsibility for the content and running of the gathering as far as possible with those from former Yugoslavia. I was asked by one highly educated and skilled professional woman, a leading member of a most impressive group of peace educators, what was now the status of that group. I was baffled by the question. What could she mean? Why was she asking me? It emerged that she wanted some kind of validation from the Committee for their work and competence - perhaps accreditation even. I simply said that they had been skilled professionally before I had ever met them, that they had done more training than I had had hot dinners, and that they would continue in their highly valued work quite independently of the approval of the Committee, which was glad to play a support role but had no status to bestow. It seems those working in the former communist world have a lot of recovering to do in the area of self-respect. I was delighted when later this same woman and her colleague asked me to be a co-trainer with them in a piece of work *they* had been invited to do. It made me feel that we had, after all, the makings of a healthy relationship.

The overall content of our Schlaining meeting was a surprise to me - though maybe it should not have been. It was very much focused on individual psychological impulses and needs. Social and political considerations were scarcely mentioned; strategy likewise. For instance, in our session on recovery and reconciliation, conversations remained in the interpersonal realm and most participants could not be coaxed into consideration of inter-group conflicts and needs. The immediate reason for this seemed to be that the inner pain that was released in this exercise needed a lot of time for processing. We had not allowed enough time for this to happen and for the wider questions to be considered. But I think that what was true in this exercise is true more generally: that both because of the political and social upheaval which has followed the collapse of communism and because of the misery of the war, the spiritual or emotional turmoil and hunger of people is immense. This inner pain requires attention and a degree of healing; people need some kind of psychological care and sustenance, if they are to go on functioning and finding ways to act

creatively. They also need to make some kind of sense of what has happened and is happening in order to see what can be done. Their own individual experience is the most natural - and arguably the most important - place to start; and starting there fulfils an immediate personal need.

Furthermore, whereas those working in the many peace groups of former Yugoslavia can have an impact at the community level, in most if not all cases, their direct political leverage is virtually non-existent. They were concerned to be more effective in their dealings with those in authority whose permission they needed to carry on their activities. Here again, however, most participants were reluctant to concede that an official is not simply a human being to be reached out to, but also part of a system, both constrained and motivated by position and power. Maybe recognising these wider pressures and frameworks is not really useful - only disempowering; but maybe it could enable people to operate more strategically.

One other consideration occurred to me. This was, apart from two participants from former Yugoslavia and one outside trainer, an all female group. Given the strong macho culture in which these women are living and working, it seems possible that they react in a way by having a particular regard for the subjective and the psychological (and a high proportion of them are psychologists -clearly a women's profession in their region). Those of us from outside did comment on the absence of substantial male participation in Schlaining, which reflected the composition of their groups at home. We asked how they would explain it, but received no answer. I wonder whether the predominating style and interests of their membership both reflects and perpetuates this gender imbalance. (I realise that I could be seen as falling into some fairly crude stereotyping here, but feel that cultural factors have an inescapable influence which can, however, be modified if we are aware of them.)

None of the outside trainers offered any real challenge to this very personal way of thinking. This was partly, maybe, for some of us, a reflection of our own personal skills and inclinations, but I think that we were also going with the flow -respecting the expressed needs of our friends. It seems to me now that Schlaining was fulfilling the function of a psychological or spiritual health farm. Participants had put 'burnout' high on their list of things to be addressed, and I think that this time together was a way of addressing not just the question but the fact of burnout.

Nonetheless, I am left with some important questions. I feel that some of the training packages most favoured and represented at this exchange meeting are, if they stand alone, over-simple and inadequate in offering or encouraging a realistic and rounded response to conflict, at the interpersonal level, let alone the social or political. For us as a committee, I think I am raising some important underlying questions about responsibility and judgement. It is another form of the question about who knows best, which regularly comes into debates about the role of a trainer: teacher, facilitator or both? And it brings with it questions about who is an appropriate trainer. As yet our judgements in this area have been tacit rather than explicit. These are sensitive matters, and most of us are into conflict avoidance, despite our rhetoric. (Well, I speak for myself, of course.)

As far as I can identify my own current working assumptions about the Committee and the kind of training it aims to provide, they are as follows:

The committee's work is aimed at providing supportive resources to individuals in groups, and to the groups themselves, who wish to be or are engaged in creative social and/or political action in situations of conflict. Therefore what we offer should relate both to personal resources and capacities, and to organisational, social and political matters.

When a request comes to us from a new group, or a group new to conflict resolution thinking, the training 'menu' we offer should be broad, providing an introduction to the values, approaches and skills we aim to support and promote. (We need, at some stage, to clarify together what those values, approaches and skills are, and make sure that our assumed agreement about them is real.)

A group may ask for specialised training, or some particular 'brand' of training, either because of their own particular needs or interests, or because that is what they have heard about from others. In that case, so long as that special form of training is in line with our agreed values and approaches, it seems to me we should try to provide it; but we should also make sure that the group concerned has -or has had - made available to it other forms of training which could complement the specialised, or put it in context.

**In former Yugoslavia we are often working with a particular pre-existing group, in which case it should not be too difficult to establish with them what their particular training needs are, constructing agendas in co-operation with the group. Though they will need to have some understanding of the options, these will be offered in response to their own context and expressed interests. Where a workshop is being held with a temporary group, brought together specifically for the occasion, their overall needs will have to be estimated by the organisers and trainers, and the first part of the workshop, if not all of it, pre-planned.**

**The trainers we invite to work for us should be characterised by skill in their field, but also by humility, sensitivity and flexibility, with a desire to respond to need rather than promote their own preferences or formula, and aware of their own limitations.'**

### **Later reflections**

I am interested by the firmly prescriptive tone of those last paragraphs, and by the fact that it does not make me feel at all uncomfortable. I think that is because the committee has taken on particular purposes and responsibilities, and I have a role of responsibility within the committee. I also knew that we were looking for greater clarity on the issues under discussion, and that my advocacy for certain positions would contribute to that. These questions which I raised with the committee have recurred throughout my research: questions about what makes for respectful intervention in situations of violent conflict; questions also about the relationship between clients and service-providers: about avoiding the abuse of power or encouragement of dependency, but also recognising and accepting the effects of history on relationships, and the power and responsibility associated with this kind of work.

The special 'psychological' character of the Schlaining workshop came from many things: the emotional tension the participants had been carrying; the fact that they were all (or nearly all) trainers, some of them strongly influenced by a particular form of psychologically focused training; the scope and the limits of their perceived possibilities at that time, and the possibly related fact that

they were nearly all women, in a society where politics (as elsewhere) is very largely male territory; territory which has in any case been largely taken over by violence.

### **Another workshop: similarities and differences**

In August the same year, I was facilitator of another event for people from different parts of what had been Yugoslavia, this time a training workshop, held expressly for women. It was organised by a Swedish ecumenical body as part of a European church programme for the promotion of nonviolence. I was the only facilitator (which I later came to see as unwise, especially in such a potentially conflictual group). The organising group of Scandinavian women (five in all) participated in plenary sessions of the workshop, and played a supportive and servicing role. A few of the participants already had some involvement in the human rights and peace movement, but most were new to the idea of involvement in this kind of work, and new to this kind of workshop. Like the participants in Schlaining, they came from very difficult circumstances and were carrying much fear and grief.

We were housed in a guest house beside lake Balaton in Hungary. In these delightful surroundings the women had a chance to let go of some of the grief and tension they had carried for so long; a time away from the necessity to cope. It was an immensely charged and cathartic week, though it also involved much hard thinking and planning. One major challenge was to deal with the conflict present in the group. I had been aware of the potentially explosive mix of participants, but somehow had not really registered just how much we were all taking on.

My account of the workshop, written soon after the event with the help of detailed journal notes, reflects the emotions of the week. It draws me back into them when I read it, and at the same time embarrasses me a little at a distance - which is true of many of my accounts. I am once again made conscious, on re-reading it, of the value I put on the discovery of unity. This continues to make me uneasy; and yet, if I remember what these women had suffered as the price of *dis*unity, this valuing does not seem inappropriate. Maybe tolerance is a less ambitious concept than unity, and one which

would serve just as well. (Voluntary tolerance presupposes, I think - particularly after hard conflict and acute suffering - some strong underlying value or impulse to support it; but there is also a kind of tolerance which is born and developed through necessity, for instance when people start trading with each other again.)

Writing my account of Balaton was a way of processing my own feelings after the workshop. It was a chance to tell a story I needed to tell, as well as a way of inquiring further into its meaning. It is relatively short, describing two key episodes in detail, and discussing other aspects of the workshop in more general terms, relating them to other workshops and to my inquiry more generally. The account is reproduced in full. As elsewhere, the names of people have been changed, and organisational names replaced by generalised descriptions.

#### **'REFLECTIONS ON A WORKSHOP HELD BY LAKE BALATON IN HUNGARY**

**AUGUST 20th - 26th 1995**

**Apart from the four Swedish, one Finnish and one Hungarian woman representing the European organising group, and the workshop leader from England (me), the group that gradually came together at a Reformed Church conference centre near the shores of Lake Balaton was made up of women from different parts of what was once Yugoslavia. There were five Hungarians from Vojvodina and one from Croatia, one Serb and one Albanian from Kosovo, one Croat and one Serb from Belgrade, and Croats and Bosnians from Zagreb and Osijek in Croatia, and from the border town of Zupanja, which has suffered years of constant bombardment.**

**Ages ranged from late teens and early twenties to middle age and beyond, which, together with the variety of styles, personalities and professions, and the mix of deeply religious women, Protestant and Catholic (no Orthodox or Moslem) with atheists and agnostics, made for a group of great complexity. Two things united us: that we were all women and that we all longed for an end to the hurting in what was once Yugoslavia.**

Although I had been well aware of the intention to bring together a regionally and nationally mixed group, and to draw in women who had not yet experienced similar workshops, I had not fully internalised what that would mean in terms of fear, suspicion, pain and hostility. As part of the introductory process on the first evening, participants spoke - first in twos and threes, and then in the whole group - of their hopes and fears for the week. What they hoped for was trust, openness and tolerance; what they feared was mistrust, lack of openness, and conflict. At the word 'conflict', one young woman exclaimed that she was shocked that anyone should think conflict possible in such a group. This gave me the opportunity to say that I fully expected conflict; that it was my experience that groups started with a determination to be united and that in the event it was through conflict in various forms that they forged a stronger, deeper unity; that we had succeeded in bringing together a group which mirrored the mix of nationalities of former Yugoslavia and that by the same token we were bound to experience some of the tensions of the current situation there; that we had come together to learn about creative responses to conflict and that learning by doing would be the most fundamental learning; also that I was confident we could do it - manage the conflict, respond creatively - and that I wanted participants to trust themselves and the process.

The women engaged with a will in the first full day's work; but I sensed their tiredness and stress. By the afternoon, rumour had reached me that the Hungarians from Vojvodina had told the Hungarian (from Hungary) organiser that they suspected the two young Serbs of being spies. Before I could arrange to meet with them to discuss their fears, the storm broke. In the evaluation at the end of the afternoon, M., one of the Vojvodina women, having in various small but important ways, as much for personal as for national reasons, found herself out of tune with the larger group, exploded with agitation and said it was not possible for her to work in a group where some members supported the expansionist ambitions of the Serbian government, and where she felt that to be open would expose her to great danger.

Olga, one of the two young Serbs, also not the easiest personality in the group, giving a first impression of sulkiness or arrogance, responded that she had not expected to be attacked in such a group and that she felt threatened by such behaviour. This, as Maria later explained to me, was the last straw for her. How could a Serb feel threatened? It was the Hungarians who were being threatened (and worse) with the



suppression of their language and culture, with the confiscation of their homes so that they could be given to Serb refugees from Krajina, ultimately threatened with 'ethnic cleansing'. She left the room in tears. The group sat dumbfounded and I acknowledged the distress and fear that the exchange had both reflected and engendered, repeating that such conflict was to be expected, that the feelings on either side were understandable and should be respected, that I had every confidence that they could be handled and that it was good for all of us that they had come out sooner rather than later. As I left the session, I spoke with Olga, who was clearly upset at Maria's reaction and said she had not intended to hurt or offend her, but explained her own feelings at being, as she felt, accused.

I went to Maria's room and found her in great distress, sobbing that she was not used to such 'psychological workshops', that she had been already near to breaking point and did not know if she could stand the pain of this experience. I held her, comforted her, apologised for any part I had played in causing her such pain, listened to her explanation - the suffering and fears that had led to her outburst; her indignation that Olga should claim to feel threatened. I tried to explain to her, from my own understanding of what I had heard and from Olga's clarification, what Olga had meant. Maria asserted that she had not accused anyone of anything - had spoken only generally - which I challenged, as gently as I could, repeating what I had heard.

I also said that I knew Olga already, and that she was well known in the peace movement (which Maria correctly said did nothing to prove she was not a spy) and that I was quite sure she was an opponent of Serb expansionism and nationalism. Maria could not see why she had not said as much, and I pointed out that she, with her background, would consider that self-evident. At last I asked Maria what she wanted to happen and how I could help. She replied, 'Oh I know what I must do. I'm a Christian. I have to be reconciled.' I wanted to ask her if she understood what she was saying, but decided that would be impertinent. She gave me permission to outline her feelings to Olga, and to arrange a meeting. Then she dried her eyes and came down to dinner. I marvelled at her courage.

After the meal I found Olga and tried to help her understand (without betraying any confidence) what lay behind M.'s outburst and subsequent walking out, explaining that she had no experience of opposition or peace movement Serbs and needed to hear Olga say what she (Olga) took for granted: that she opposed her government's

policy and actions - and had indeed suffered for her views and actions against those policies. (She had been suspended from her job for six months.) Olga was only too willing to accept both the explanation and the need. She and I were looking for Maria when we came upon the residue of the base group to which, by good fortune, they both belonged. They were discussing together, the one Croat and two other Hungarians from Vojvodina, what they could do to help their two missing members. I said that I thought their greatest need was to feel accepted, that their behaviour was understood and that they would still be welcome, and would have the group's support in dealing with their conflict. Olga hung back, saying she did not want to interrupt their discussions, but they drew her in; and at that moment Maria arrived and joined the group and she and Olga began immediately to say to each other what they needed to, with the group's gentle support; and seeing the matter well in hand I withdrew.

By the end of the week these two women, the young Serb punk from Kosovo and the middle aged Calvinist Hungarian from Vojvodina, had become each other's firmest admirers. 'I still find Maria's views difficult sometimes', said Olga, but she's wonderful.' Olga's apparent sulkiness and distance evaporated as the week went by, and her engagement was thoughtful and committed (despite late nights and hangovers). Maria, through an astonishing piece of sustained virtuoso role-play, in which she took the part of a young single black mother of three unruly boys, became a star in the group (stardom consolidated by her impersonation of a noisy and prolifically egg-producing hen at our final party) and a major contributor.

I would like to have been more alert to the position of the two Serbs in our group. (We had not realised how the group from Serbia would be composed.) They felt very much isolated and besieged at times, as they told me later. They had no traumatised Serb refugee in the group to point to, either - no comparable suffering to place beside the suffering of some of their fellow participants. But they really handled their position very well, and their very vulnerability in the group probably helped to disarm the prejudices of others. They also shared information, in a quiet way, about the pressures and difficulties of their own lives (which are very far from easy) which came as real news to some group members, and radically altered their perceptions of what it could mean to be a Serb.

The individual (and related) journeys through the week of Olga and Maria somehow symbolised the unfolding of the whole group process. When I announced at the

beginning of the second full day that Olga and Maria had met, together with their group, and had reached a new understanding, the relief was palpable. I remarked that although it was unlikely that we had seen the last of conflict, we could now feel the confidence that came from experiencing that we had the capacity to handle it. These feelings were reflected in the feedback from the base groups that evening. Trust was growing. Participants were far more confident and at ease, relaxing into the process.

Because of what had happened, I had decided, after some reflection and consultation, to change the order of the agenda, so that instead of proceeding with questions of violence, nonviolence and empowerment, we reverted to the subject of communication and the obstacles to it, including matters of identity, prejudice and strong emotions (followed by 'needs and fears mapping' - an exercise in empathy as well as analysis). One experienced participant whom I consulted felt this was something we needed to do, in order, especially, to address the question of individual and group identity and responsibility. Nonetheless, she was not convinced that we could handle it. We decided that it was a risk that had to be taken (the idea of risk-taking was a theme for the week) and in the event the day was all we could have hoped. My consultant told me that evening that she had been very much afraid, but now felt completely satisfied - to the point that if there were nothing to follow 'it would be enough.' We had done what she had not thought possible and looked at these hard issues in ways that had not threatened participants but (in the words of another base group reporter) drawn them through a process in a way that did not hurt anyone but in which each felt she had been listened to. Since the questions we had worked through were also inescapably challenging, this was good to hear.

The crucial exercise, I think, had been one in which participants are invited to look at the question of identity and belonging. Each is asked to make a list of as many groups as she can think of to which she belongs or which help to form her identity; then to select the three which she considers most important and to write by each of the three something about it that makes her feel proud, and something about it that makes her feel uncomfortable or ashamed. Participants are then asked to share these lists with one or two others (and possibly go on to tell each other about occasions when they have been on the one hand victims of prejudice or discrimination and on the other hand guilty of them. We did not do this.). Individuals share with the whole group anything that they choose to, discussing, as appropriate, questions of

difference, justice, and the need both for critical awareness, and respect and sensitivity, in relation to our own cultures and those of others.

Later in the week participants chose to analyse together situations 'so hot', according to my experienced consultant, 'that we'd have needed the fire brigade if we'd mentioned them at the beginning'. There were differences, arguments; but handled from a basis of trust, and therefore no longer too threatening. Nonetheless, the women were surprised by - and justifiably proud of - their own courage.

This profound learning and changing, brought about by the experience of confronting conflict and building community out of difference, was further deepened by the experience and recognition of common pain. On the morning of our next to last day, as we shared stories of nonviolent action, we were stopped in our tracks by an explosion. In all probability it came from the use of dynamite on a building site or in a quarry; but in our group its effect was devastating: panic, half relief, nagging doubts, bitter tears. Once the women were convinced that there was no danger to us there, they were overtaken by the fears and grief of years - and of their present reality. The stories came spilling out: of cratered gardens, rivers where no-one dared swim, useless wrecks of houses, lost relatives, the daily risks of humdrum activities. After much crying, holding, smoking, singing, more crying, more cigarettes and coffee, this courageous group went back to work. That is how they cope - by carrying on. And at our party that evening we laughed as none of us could remember laughing - real laughter, joy, total silliness, complete relaxation; and closed with more tears, as we lit candles of hope and longing.

Could all this have happened in a mixed group, or a men's group? I think not; but is that my prejudice or lack of trust? Is it possible to generalise? There were clear reasons for the intensity of feelings here; but in a mixed or male group could they have been expressed and handled with such freedom? Could they have been allowed to flow, to reach completion - both the pain and the comfort, the tears and the laughter? Probably physical contact is important in all this, and in our group it was unrestrained. (I certainly felt, and wrote in my journal on the first evening, how totally different men and women are. I realised how free and at home I felt in the group, and noted, 'I should try and respect 'the other' more (ie men). I do the classic thing of applauding individuals, then regarding them as exceptions and rubbishing the rest.'))

In my reflections on the gathering of trainers and educators (almost all women) from former Yugoslavia held in Schlaining in the Spring, I remarked on what seemed to me a reluctance to spend time on analytical and strategic thinking and the more political aspects of conflict. Although the word 'political' was used only pejoratively at Balaton, there was no reluctance to engage with questions of inter-group conflict and public policy; indeed, the applicability of the offered models to such situations was a matter for great satisfaction, according to the feedback of all the base groups. The cases chosen by the different working groups during the day were highly appropriate to the models (or vice versa!), and the analysis and consequent strategies which they produced extremely cogent. The theoretical input given to provide a context for the work of that day was also received attentively. Indeed, I remarked in these women no lack of enthusiasm for theory - only a determination to find practical applications for it. Likewise, our discussion on the theoretical and philosophical basis for nonviolent action, and its different forms, was valued for its relevance to participants' own experience - because it gave a name and a thought frame to what they had been doing instinctively, so affirming their already courageous and imaginative efforts and helping them to think about them more clearly. In addition, participants considered their new-found knowledge to be practical because they saw it as transferable to their groups at home (especially with the help of the promised manual).

The assumptions on which this workshop had been based had been explained on the first evening and were as follows:

that the spiritual, emotional and practical aspects of the group's deliberations and experiences will be woven together, since they are inextricably linked;

that the group will become a community of learning, using participatory methods, drawing on the experience and wisdom of each person, and working in an informal and relaxed atmosphere;

that analysis and imagination are both important, and that laughter and gravity are complementary;

that the agenda which has been prepared is intended as a framework for the development of understanding, skills, resources and commitment, and that it can be changed as the workshop goes along;

that the group's own experience of working together will provide important material for learning, and, when it seems particularly relevant or necessary (for instance, if there is a conflict), what is happening in the group may, for a while, become the focus of its work.

We lived out all these assumptions. Our days began, for those who wanted it, with a time of meditation, to which many contributed -those who had already identified themselves as religious. But the depth of communication and emotion which characterised the discussions which went on in and out of sessions, and the passionately held values expressed, could also be termed 'spiritual', and one of the cross-boundary exchanges which took place in the group was between religious and not-religious members discovering what made the other tick.

The mixture of seriousness and levity, intense discussion and crazy games, helpless tears and uncontrollable laughter, was also a hallmark of the week, and gave us a feeling of wholeness in spite and because of the grief. It was a mixture we needed for the health of each individual and for our healthy growth into a community.

The experience of discovering and sharing so much latent knowledge, both in plenary sessions and in work done in small groups, was a powerful and exciting one. One participant said to me at the end, 'How did you do it? When you asked us a question, you wrote down all our answers. How could you know we'd get it right?' I explained that I worked from the assumption that they did know most of what they needed already, and that I had made any additions or comments I had felt necessary. Another participant, giving feedback from her base group, remarked, 'It's interesting that the things we've been learning have been things we already knew but couldn't use because something in our thinking was stopping us.' Helping the knowledge (as in 'understanding') to flow, as well as giving it some useful order, is a large part of education. Exchange of information was in this case also of great importance. Within the divided region of former Yugoslavia, it is hard for communities to know what is actually happening elsewhere, and what others are experiencing.

This group's sharp engagement at the conceptual and analytical level was well matched by its imaginative and creative energy; which meant that reports from small groups, which can so often be tedious and lacking in impact, were in this case fascinating, being both clear and colourful in their presentation; and in the breaks as well as in sessions, women sowed and drew, read poems, created symbols and danced.

The variety inherent in the methodology of the workshop, and its participatory nature, together with the experience of handling the dynamics of our own group -

served, according to participants, to maintain both interest and energy. ('We saved a lot of money here. Often at seminars we get bored and go to the shops instead.') Besides maximising learning by the sharing of knowledge, participation aided its digestion. 'It's easiest to remember things you've been involved with. Working on our own cases and doing role-plays: that's what made it all work.' (Base group feedback again.)

The agenda certainly underwent changes, both major and minor, in response to what was happening in the group and to needs expressed - for example for more rest at lunch time. Responsiveness to need was something we all aimed for, and represented the living out of the value of respect which provided the foundation for our working and living together. One of the base group reporters, expressing her group's appreciation for the fruit which was provided during breaks, noted that it was not only the fruit itself that was appreciated, but the care which its provision represented. Through this kind of practical respect, through the experience of mutual attentiveness, through the base group process which provided a place for all voices to be heard, channelled, and taken into account, participants felt the healing and strengthening power which come from recognition and acknowledgement.

I hope that respect, acknowledgement and encouragement were among the things I was able to offer as workshop leader. With this subject matter particularly, it seems essential to try, at least, to demonstrate as well as talk about it. This is true for the whole group, as well as for the leader. For me, it was a particular pleasure to have someone say to me at the end, 'You're a wonderful pedagogue (am I really a pedagogue?) - not just because of your methodology: most importantly because of your attitude.' And I can say the same for the group: they were wonderful participants, not just because they engaged with everything with so much zest and intelligence, but above all because they lived out the care and acknowledgement which lay at the heart of all our work and aspirations.

At the beginning of the week I had the feeling that the working agenda we were proposing was in itself a profound disrespect for the women's real (apparent) need for nothing more than a good holiday - and I think more than a few of them shared the same feeling. However, as the days went by, it began to be reported that this was much better than a holiday, as well as being a holiday in itself because it was so different: it was giving the women something that they sorely needed: time out of

**danger, time to be looked after and free of responsibility, but also food for the mind and heart: understanding, inspiration, encouragement and love.**

**I cannot adequately express my respect for these women: for their courage, vitality, determination, their sheer will to keep going, keep living, keep their lives, their dignity and humanity intact. The way they went back to work after that bomb scare was symbolic of the way they cope at 'home'; how they keep picking themselves up and doggedly carrying on with their lives. One of them described how the women of her home town, Sarajevo, manage, without chemist's shops, without even running water, to keep themselves immaculately turned out - not so much because it matters in itself, but because it symbolises their determination to retain their dignity in the midst of degradation. Others spoke with weary pride of the fact that every day they get up and prepare food, take their children to school, do whatever work there is to be done. This is the way they survive; and in addition they still find the will to keep struggling for the maintenance, or development, or resuscitation, of those things in society which even now embody human decency. This was the common ground they found, the spirit they shared and nourished in this week by the lake.**

**In the closing session our interpreter, a highly professional but somewhat unapproachable woman, finally thawed and spoke for herself: 'I spend a lot of time at important conferences where the words are all empty - hot air - and nothing real is said. The contrast could not be greater with this workshop, where everything that has been said has come from the heart. I have been immeasurably enriched.' She spoke for me too; and that communication of such depth and honesty took place in such a group and at such a time seems to me clear proof of the miraculous power of our will to connect, of our instinctive recognition of our interdependence, our need for communion. Given our capacity for hurt and destruction, thank God for such a power and such an instinct.'**

### **Later reflections**

**It will be clear from those last paragraphs that to respect such a group was hardly effortful. They commanded, or rather drew, my respect, both on account of what they were living through and the**



way in which they were dealing with it and with each other. The acknowledgement and encouragement which they gave and found in this workshop were of the greatest importance: a kind of spiritual food. Bringing their own knowledge and skills into recognition was part of this; so the spiritual and the practical were not separate.

I have reflected since this workshop that to have allowed myself to be persuaded to facilitate such a week alone was not only unfair to myself, but bordering on the irresponsible. I know I felt the weight of it at the time, although I did not fully articulate it. I felt too important: both too powerful and too responsible; too much and too little respected. I notice that in my account I wrote about the role of workshop 'leader', which was the way the organisers spoke and thought about it. I see now that I was drawn into that way of thinking, and at one level enjoyed it. I am still not sure how I think about it, except that it makes me uncomfortable. But I am clear that, whatever the nature of the role, I had better not undertake it alone in future.

Although the time-task-refreshment question was, on balance, more positively experienced at Balaton than in some other workshops (the work being considered 'much better than a holiday'), it was clearly still an issue. There are, it seems to me, no easy answers; but it seems that what one vital factor is that the work should be felt to be meeting a real need. Beyond that perhaps the most one can hope for is not to get the balance so wrong as to destroy good energy and goodwill.

### **Research summary: learning from the three workshops**

In one way these workshops were similar to each other, being in each case for participants from different groups within one area of conflict. In other respects they were very different. The Beirut workshop feels very far away, in time and place and emotionally. The other two feel much closer. That will be partly on account of my ongoing connectedness to former Yugoslavia; but I realise also that working with women only groups feels like a special kind of being at home, with one area of tension (for me at least) excluded at least from the process itself. I think the level of my

emotional engagement with the Schlaining and Balaton workshops is reflected in my style of writing about them.

Another likely cause of a relative sense of distance from the Beirut workshop was the fact that I was in an unfamiliar place and culture; but I think more important was the 'fact' that for the earlier part of the workshop at least I felt suspicion on the part of participants towards the facilitators, which I construed as a reflection of relations past and present between the Arab world and the West. I have never experienced any such resistance when working with people from the former Yugoslavia; though the effects of past relationships were felt as dependency in the Schlaining meeting, and had to be resisted. I believe that both in Beirut and in Schlaining the actual experience of co-operative relations largely overcame these negative effects. They do indicate the need, however, for encouraging the use of local capacities wherever possible.

At Balaton, I felt altogether welcomed and had a clear, agreed role to fulfil. Although I felt afterwards that I had carried too much power and responsibility, I believe that at the time I managed it well and was of real service.

Not surprisingly, in these workshops what I learned in practice about respect and conflict felt more important than what I learned in theory. In Beirut the conflict remained low key, and was present, under the surface, at many levels. In Schlaining the big political conflict was felt not in itself but in its effects of emotional exhaustion, which called for recognition and care. At Balaton the conflict from which the women came was reflected both in tension between participants and emotional fatigue, and was played out in the conflict which took place within the group - which proved cathartic. At the same time it was that conflict, together with the 'bomb' scare that helped create such a close bond between all members of the group: one which embraced me and the Scandinavian women as well.

The use of the 'stages' diagram and the Goss-Mayr models for preparing nonviolent action proved useful in Beirut, but excitingly powerful at Balaton, enabling the women to recognise their own actual and potential ability to act for change at the political as well as psycho-social level. These

models were used to similar effect in my next 'women only' workshop: one which was held on another continent and was characterised, for me, by conflict of a different kind, as I shall discuss in my next chapter.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### MULTI-REGIONAL/ CONTINENTAL WORKSHOPS

In the Autumn and winter of 1995-1996, I facilitated or co-facilitated three workshops which were neither intercontinental nor concerned with one particular country or region of conflict, but brought together participants from a very wide area who nonetheless had much in common. One of these workshops was for women trainers from across Africa, held in Harare in early January; the other two, held in September near Moscow and in late January near Warsaw, were for peace and human rights workers from different parts of the former Soviet Union and what used to be called Eastern Europe.

In these three workshops we were not having to deal with external conflicts being played out in the group's dynamics. In Moscow and Warsaw there were, not unexpectedly, differences in the type of work and approach of those from the two different parts of the post-Communist world, but these differences were not the occasion of conflict. In Harare the potential divide between French speaking and English speaking participants did not materialise, being displaced, perhaps, by polarisation of another kind: that is by South-North confrontation. And in the Moscow and Warsaw workshops there was tension between the Russian and Western members of the facilitation team. So in these three workshops, as in those related to specific conflicts, what I learned about respect was in a sense more experiential than theoretical; about its presence and absence in relationships within the workshop process, rather than about cultural approaches and concepts. I experienced difficult challenges in my role as facilitator and colleague; challenges which I felt deeply, as I tried to keep my head and my balance in handling the power, responsibility and pressure involved. These unlooked for experiences of conflict reminded me both of the limits to its predictability (and to the usefulness of predictions) and of its pervasiveness in human relationships - especially where power and dignity are at stake (as I suppose they almost always are).

In these quite difficult circumstances my theoretical models - and my confidence in them - held up well. In different ways I evaluated the Harare and Warsaw workshops quite thoroughly, from a research point of view, getting feedback from colleagues on my record and interpretation of events, and on my own behaviour. Both these accounts are long, but I feel their length is justified by the importance of the detail of observation about what happened (in the Harare account particularly) and the feedback and discussion which they include. In the case of the Moscow workshop, I have selected parts of my account to include with a framing commentary, rather than reproducing the whole account.

In Moscow and Warsaw, gender was once more an uncomfortable issue; but that discomfort was as nothing compared with what I felt in Harare, where I experienced the contradictory feelings of being both at home and beleaguered in a group of my own gender.

Although the Moscow workshop came first, I shall present it later, in conjunction with the Warsaw workshop, and begin with my account of the Harare workshop. This was perhaps the most challenging piece of work I have ever had to survive, providing a rich but very painful source of learning. The account begins with an explanation of how I aimed to write it. The points which I make would apply to any comparable piece of writing. I think I must have set them out with so much care in this case because I felt how difficult it was going to be to balance my own immediate feelings with a more reflective internal voice and with other perspectives, both expressed and surmised.

Note: The agenda of this workshop was the one used subsequently in the resource pack produced by the organisation I was working for in Harare. It is set out in full in Chapter Four.

In presenting this account I have marked the days with subheadings, but my reflections often travel across those daily boundaries.

## **'ACCOUNT OF THE HARARE TRAINING FOR TRAINERS**

**JANUARY 7th - 12th 1996**

**This one week seminar was intended for African women trainers who were already experienced practitioners in the field of community education, and wished to add to their training repertoire the approaches, ideas and skills of Conflict Resolution / Transformation. The following account, based on my journal notes and memory, is a mix of narrative and reflection, summary and detail. It is written from my viewpoint - it cannot be otherwise - but I have tried not wilfully to select or exclude elements for my own purposes. I say 'not wilfully' as I will clearly have made unconscious and conscious choices in what I have remembered and recorded. I will have noted things (not all things) related to my focus of respect, to my own behaviour and feelings as facilitator, and those of participants, to relationships within the group and between the group (and individual participants) and myself, as well as their responses to, and engagement with, the content and processes of the workshop. My aim in my journalling was to have a record to examine and interpret, rather than to illustrate or prove some theory or viewpoint, but I make no claims to objectivity . In this piece of writing, the narrative is inevitably coloured by, and often explicitly accompanied by, interpretation. I have been vigilant with myself, in order to avoid, as far as possible, self-justifying censorship or embellishment; but my self-awareness will have had limits.**

### **Before the workshop**

**When I was originally invited to be one of two facilitators in this training for trainers, I welcomed the opportunity of increasing my small experience of working in Africa, but was quite clear that my participation would make sense only if I worked with someone who knew Africa intimately and would be accepted by the participants as doing so - in other words, an African. I also wanted to respect sensitivities about racism and colonialism. I knew, and liked and respected enormously, a Ghanaian woman trainer, Cleo. We had often said we would like to work together. I contacted her and she was excited by the prospect of this training. We agreed to do it. She was**

in the United States at the time, but we did some planning by 'phone and correspondence, had a brief meeting when she was in London, and planned to spend two days together immediately before the workshop.

Two days before this scheduled planning meeting, I received a call from Cleo to say that someone very close to her, whom she had regarded as a second father, had died unexpectedly; that she was devastated, and that his funeral would take place during the week of the workshop. It was clear that she could not come to Zimbabwe. It was also clear that it was too late for the workshop to be cancelled (since all the tickets had been bought, and some of the participants had already begun their journey), and far too late for me to find another co-facilitator, or for the organisers to make other arrangements. This left me, as I felt it, with no responsible choice but to make the best of a situation which I would have avoided at all costs: undertaking a week's facilitation alone in a training for trainers (always a daunting task), a single European trainer with a group of African women.

I decided that the best thing I could do, from my own point of view and that of the participants, was to explain the position to them and to ask for one person each day to act as co-facilitator, having also helped me adjust or remake that day's agenda in the light of feedback from base groups. Clearly this arrangement would be less than ideal, since the normal overall co-planning would not be able to take place or full co-responsibility be assumed. On the other hand, it would be a way of utilising and acknowledging the expertise contained within the group, and sharing the facilitator's load and power, at least to some extent, and modelling a co-operative way of working. I felt I needed ongoing input into the agenda from an African perspective - and I needed not to be in the uncomfortable and potentially symbolic position of a lone European trainer in an African group. I did not consider such a position as appropriate and did not wish to be seen as so considering it: I wanted to respect and be respected as doing so.

My research agenda for this workshop had been to monitor, as usual, my own respectfulness and to continue to develop my understanding of what respect could mean, in relation to conflict, in different contexts and cultures. In addition, I wished to note the response of participants to the content I was offering on questions of power and justice in conflict, and their relationship to conflict resolution. Cleo had agreed to give me her feedback on this at the end of the seminar. When it became

clear that she would not be coming, I asked my colleagues who were organising the seminar, Jen, the training manager and Kirsty, the training project officer, to give me what feedback they could. In addition I planned to use the feedback contained in the plenary and base group evaluations and given to me by my daily co-facilitators.

I arrived at the conference centre outside Harare early on the Saturday morning. We were due to begin the following evening. My first impression of the site was of its pleasant homeliness: attractive gardens, pleasant places to sit and work outdoors, friendly dining room, adequate bedrooms and washing arrangements, and very comfortable beds. I realised that, as is often the case at such events in Europe, some participants and some staff would be sharing rooms. Given the strain I knew I would be under, I was glad that I would not. I learned that the telephone lines were poor and that transport into Harare was unreliable. These disadvantages seemed to me regrettable but manageable. What seemed more serious was that the plenary room was rather small for our purposes, and hot, and that the interpretation equipment necessitated the use of table microphones and thus an undesirable degree of formality and use of space in the seating arrangements. I felt some despair and irritation; then decided there was nothing to be done but to make the best of it, arranging the tables in a horse-shoe shape, bringing in as many fans as possible and resolving to go outside for games and group-work.

#### **Composition of the group; identities and roles**

The twenty-five participants came from Burundi, Cameroon, Madagascar, Gambia, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Ruanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda. The absence of anyone from Zimbabwe itself was the subject of adverse comment from participants and greatly regretted by the organisers, who had relied on their local partner organisation to make the opportunity known to appropriate groups and individuals.

Maintaining a sense of equality in the workshop between French and English was going to be important, especially showing due respect to French speaking participants who, as things had worked out, were in the minority. Two interpreters, recommended by the local partner organisation, had been hired, and although I facilitated plenary sessions in English (as the strain of trying to do it all in French



would have been too great), I was able to understand French without interpretation and to use my French with individuals and small groups. I also made sure that everything went on flipcharts in both languages and asked participants to tell me if any of their language needs were not being met.

Since African women usually divided by language were given the opportunity of working together in this seminar, and since Africa is no doubt blessed with as much cultural variety as any other continent, this was for all of us a 'cross cultural' event. However, the biggest cultural difference - and difference in perspective - was the one between me and my European organisational colleagues on the one hand and the participants on the other. Two African staff members from the organisation, Mbiya and Faith, who were responsible for different aspects of the organisation's Africa programme, were there, at their own request, as participants, and played a very helpful role in that capacity. However, it seems, retrospectively, that however useful to them and well explained their presence and role were, it must have reinforced the idea of Africans being excluded from the leadership. I had not been very comfortable about their coming in that capacity, because of the potential for unclarity.

#### Opening session and day one

The first twenty-four hours of the workshop were a struggle for me. In spite of all requests to the contrary, many participants came late, so that introductions and explanations had to be carried over from the first, already curtailed, evening to the following morning, and were not as full as had been intended. After a clear explanation of Cleo's absence, a heartfelt expression of my regret on their account and mine, and a request for the group's understanding and support, I had chosen to begin with an explanation of the workshop's purpose, assumptions and agenda, and move on to some consideration of group dynamics and of attitudes to conflict. This was followed by and some work on communication skills, which I explained as constituting the building blocks for conflict resolution. In the plenary evaluation, participants expressed satisfaction with the day's content, the participatory methods used, the contributions of fellow participants, and the 'useful ideas and techniques'; but they complained that the learning objectives of the workshop had not been made sufficiently clear and that they lacked a theoretical framework. In addition, they

wanted greater clarity on the difference between training and training for trainers; they wanted to move more, and they wanted more group work.

Here I feel the need to comment on my use of the word 'they'. In group evaluations, without a show of hands on each point made, it is not always easy to tell how many unheard voices would be in support of those heard. Still, the opinions expressed and described above evoked some assent, and were supported by the feedback from the base groups which met at the end of the plenary session. Here there was appreciation for my facilitation style. I was seen as patient, articulate, sensitive to participants' needs and not wanting to impose. But the sense of a lack of theory and definitions was reiterated, along with the need for greater clarity about the aims of the workshop. In addition, there was an expressed wish for 'a gender dimension', a focus on the role of African women. I noticed and recall two responses in myself. One was of puzzlement that I had given advance explanations, which to me had seemed quite careful, even laboured - about the seminar's concept and aims, my approach to theory and terminology, the fact that for the rest of the week we would be working mostly in small groups and that the focus of our work (for instance, gender issues) would come from participants' own choice and experience, and my explanations had apparently failed to communicate these things. My other response was a determination to meet as fully as I could to the group's clear needs - and to be seen to do so.

## Day two

Having conferred with Jen and Kirsty and enlisted their help (self-care), I was able the following morning to present participants with a substantial theoretical tract, a list of workshop objectives (which was simply a repackaging of the outline agenda), an extremely detailed week plan, intended for a manual, a repeat of my assurances about group work, a fresh explanation of the way this 'training for trainers' had been conceived and how gender and other issues could become the focus of our work. I explained my view that definitions and terminology, though covered to some extent in the theoretical tract they had been given, should not pre-empt our own discussions and conclusions, and that the one word we had discussed so far, 'conflict', was a word in common use, not to be imprisoned in some narrow definition; that what constituted a conflict was very much a matter of individual and cultural perception, or social construction, and that what we were mainly concerned with was

finding ways to avoid the violence and destruction which all too often accompany conflict. To offer any other definition would for me have been to be sucked into something which I considered counter-productive.

In the same way, I had not wished to begin with a theoretical lecture. For me, theory is more usefully constructed elicitively and on the basis of experience, and to begin by lecturing would have been to model the kind of relationship between facilitator and participants which I did not want. It seemed to be my educational understanding and professional integrity versus their demands. It also felt as if I was receiving double messages - one about the importance of participatory methods and group work - elicitive processes - and the other about the need to be told things, offered something ready made. Of course, these two wants are not necessarily contradictory; and they perhaps represent, respectively, modern and more traditional approaches to learning in Africa - as elsewhere. (I remember similar debates in the North Caucasus, and from my work in England.) Maybe I need to be less unbending and give people the reassurance - and perhaps clarity - which an opening lecture could provide; but something inside me says that to do so would be to give the whole workshop the wrong frame.

I could, I think, use my 'power and conflict resolution' model to present, in an interactive way, the different elements of the week's agenda in a visual and, at the same time, theoretical form, and satisfy, to some extent at least, all these conflicting wants, respecting both my own intentions and meeting the felt needs of participants. At the same time, I wonder to what degree these first day complaints were just that: the vehicle for a kind of early manoeuvring in power relations, relations which are always particularly sharply felt in training's for trainers and which had taken on an added edge because of the north-south dynamic which emerged during the course of the week. With hindsight, I think it was this dynamic which made the group at times resistant to my meanings, unconsciously unwilling to accept or comprehend what I said, coming like an invisible wall between us, or a distorting glass which affected perceptions.

I had explained my idea of inviting participants, in Cleo's absence, to help with the planning and facilitation, and had asked one of the base groups if they could suggest one of their members for the following day. Their message to me after their meeting was that they were not willing to go along with this plan, since the relationship could

not be an equal one as they had not been party to the planning of the workshop. At the time I fully accepted this response, recognising the truth of what was being said, while very much regretting that the aims of my suggestion would not therefore be accomplished. I was anxious, too, at the prospect of having to carry the full strain of facilitation for the entire workshop. What I was more concerned about, however, when I thought about it later, was one participant's suggestion that my proposal had been some kind of 'power play'. Presumably she meant that I was insincere in my proposal, wanting simply to appear to share power, while not really meaning to do so. I think now that I should have challenged this suggestion. At the time, I scarcely registered it, and felt I had no choice but to express regret, accept what was being said as representing the considered response of participants, and carry on alone. I did, at the end of the day, re-explain my proposal and invite any group or individual who felt able to help me to do so, but received no response.

There had been some complaints and suggestions from the base groups at the practical level: complaints about the telephones and food, suggestions for starting sessions at different times, and a request that per diems should be paid, in spite of the acknowledged fact that it had been made clear in advance that they would not. Kirsty promised to speak to the kitchen about the food and Jen offered to send telephone messages, but no reference was made to the matter of per diems, since in their view it had been clear all along that there would be none, and that nothing was to be gained by a discussion. In hindsight this was a mistake. The matter of our morning starting time, over which the group was strongly split, was decided when I asked if my needs could settle the matter, in view of my acknowledged overload (self-care again, combined with a wish to bring the discussion to an end).

At the end of this second full day, the evaluation was extremely positive. The process had been lively, the work interesting, and time had gone quickly. The groupwork had been enjoyable and productive - especially the role-plays - and it had been good to be outside. Both I, as facilitator, and Jen and Kirsty as organisers, had been seen to respond to participants' needs. The objectives of the workshop had been made much clearer, the 'scientific quality' of the day was appreciated, and it was felt we were working on a 'useable module'. One person repeated the request for gender issues to be taken up more concertedly - but no-one spoke in support, and when later I invited her to look at the agenda and come back to me with a proposal, she in fact came back with the view that the agenda provided plenty of scope as it stood.

We seemed to have come to the end of our plenary evaluation and I was suggesting that the base groups could now meet, when one woman declared a need to raise for all participants the question of per diems. I reminded her of our 'speak for yourself' ground rule, but she insisted that there had been much out-of-sessions talk on the matter and that she really could speak for the group. They all felt that it was a bad policy not to offer per diems - a failure to recognise participants' needs - and that the organisers needed to hear that. It was a question of justice. One of the base groups had already raised the matter, yet no response had been made. I explained why that was so, and invited my colleagues to respond now. Kirsty, by temperament exceptionally open and friendly, described in what seemed to me a straightforward way the organisation's policy on per diems. Referring to the communication that participants had received on the matter, she concluded that they had therefore apparently chosen to participate on that basis, implying that that to her there was really nothing more that could usefully be said.

This response was greeted by an uproar, and a catalogue of complaints about the venue, accommodation, facilities and food, and what was seen as a general disregard of what participants were entitled to expect. It was suggested that this was because they were Africans and women. I continued in my facilitator role, since these were not matters for which I was responsible; but I felt the strain of distancing myself from my colleagues and my own opinions, and my feeling that Kirsty was being very unfairly treated, in view of the immense care she had taken over all the arrangements, both generally and for individuals, for whom nothing was too much trouble. I allowed myself to offer one piece of information, which was that the venues used for the European trainings which I had facilitated for IA had been considerably less pleasant and comfortable than this one. This seemed to have no impact - maybe it was not believed - and eventually Jane was asked to speak. She reiterated the organisation's policy on per diems, but chose also to accept some responsibility for its application in this circumstance, as well as for other arrangements. She said that the cost of the seminar was high - and gave the figure - and that a choice had been made to spend a major amount on travel, bringing together a group of wide geographical scope, to make it a real pan-African event. The venue had been chosen with the help of the organisation's local partners: a venue which they had been felt to be pleasant and comfortably adequate, and had assured Kirsty was frequently used by comparable groups. (One of the difficulties here was that the partner organisation had

singularly failed to deliver the kind of reliable support and advice for which they had been contracted and paid, and that Jen and Kirsty felt unable to announce this fact.)

Jen's words in turn caused even greater indignation with some participants. The mention of the cost of travel seemed to suggest to at least one that Africans were being blamed for the appalling inadequacies and cost of African air services, which she saw as yet another colonial legacy. Eventually, however, emotions subsided. I said I was sure that the feelings of participants in this seminar, about per diems and other things, would be noted by the organisation, and borne in mind in future policy discussions - which Jen confirmed - and this assurance was greeted with satisfaction. Participants declared themselves pleased to have had this discussion, glad to have aired their concerns. Several of them afterwards said it had been hard on me to have to hold the process. In fact, I remember I had at one point asked for an adjournment because I felt too tired to go on, but my request had been refused! I feel no real remorse now for having staggered on, though clearly I failed yet again in self-care.

[Now I would rather say 'self-protection proved impossible'. As I revisit this paragraph now, I am struck once again by the polarity of perspectives, on both the issues and the process: a polarity which I accepted and held as facilitator, but did not comment on or propose for discussion.]

The way that individual participants related to me outside of sessions was in marked contrast to this apparent unresponsiveness. Many stopped me to encourage or congratulate me, a few to ask me how I was coping or to sympathise with me over the heavy load I was carrying. One even told me she had woken in the night and wondered how on earth I was surviving. At mealtimes, people were very friendly - to Jen and Kirsty too. A less positive aspect of mealtimes was the surly way in which some participants spoke to the kitchen staff. I was also unpleasantly surprised by the number of complaints that the food was not what they were used to (and, to my astonishment, that it was insufficient). It seemed to me strange that people would not expect and accept differences when travelling.

#### **Days three and four**

During our second day's agenda, focused on problem-solving, the twin questions of power and justice had been raised. I had acknowledged their key importance and

pointed to the fact that they would be our focus for most of the second half of the week: an assurance which was positively received. When, on the Wednesday and Thursday mornings, I presented my diagrams, they were clearly of great interest to the group; and yet I felt resistance, particularly at the points when I referred to and we discussed the option for violence or nonviolence. On thinking carefully later, I realised that this resistance had come mostly from one person, but it felt to me as if it created, or maybe represented, a dynamic of resistance. It was clear from the way participants worked with the models later that they were in fact relevant and useful, but in the plenary sessions in which they were discussed, I had the same feeling that I had had earlier, that something was obstructing my words' reception. In my journal I wrote that trying to explain myself was

'like swimming in treacle. Suspicion, I guess, of something about justice coming from Europe. One participant [who I now think was the major player in the group dynamic - see later] seemed to be desperately trying to find ways to wrong-foot me. I suggest international solidarity can help in a campaign, and she says better to be independent. I say fine, that's up to you, and she's frustrated: nothing to punch against.'

That discussion about seeking or accepting international solidarity was in fact an interesting and useful one, when other participants joined in. It gave us the opportunity to clarify the principle, already clear from my diagram, that the leadership and agenda should stay with those who initiate a campaign, ie those whose cause it is.

As I now re-read the evaluations of the Wednesday and Thursday, I feel greatly reassured. According to these, the models were new and helpful, the content of the discussions had been good, it had been good to stay in the same working groups (I had expressed some anxieties about that, but accepted what seemed to be a strong majority view) and the work had been engaging and productive. The role-plays, which I had persuaded them to do alone in their groups, had been really powerful and brought new understanding at an emotional level. I was thanked for the strength and quality of my facilitation and considered to have been articulate and confident. In addition, the food had improved and the Wednesday afternoon's trip to Harare had been enjoyed. Here Jen and Kirsty had had an opportunity to demonstrate their care and responsiveness. One of our party had had her purse stolen, and returned very distressed. Kirsty and Jen had decided right away to replace the stolen money, and this was greatly appreciated by the person concerned, and indeed by the whole group. (Here the overlap between respect and care is apparent, as it was at Balaton.)

## **Day five**

**Although one night I had dreamt very vividly of running a workshop in a really incompetent, unprepared way, on the Friday I wrote in my journal,**

**'I think for me at the moment it's more a question of acceptance than of competence. I dreamt last night that I'd looked in the mirror and found myself to be African after all. It was such a relief!'**

**I recounted this dream to one or two of the participants, wanting somehow to communicate what I felt. One of them came to me that evening and made me a gift of one of her own very beautiful African dresses. I was deeply touched.**

**The whole question of individual opinions and 'group opinions' is a vexed one. I referred to it earlier in relation to evaluation. By the end of the week I was of the opinion that one particular person in the group played a key role in defining the apparent relationship of the group with me, and as I have gone through my notes and recalled who said certain significant and impactful things, I realise it was this same person: a Malagasi woman living in England with an English husband, never, as a fellow trainer, stepping out of bounds in terms of process, but from a particular politically correct stance calling into question my whole input and function. By the position she took she drew behind her, at certain times, powerful others; but I think those others, without her setting the pace, might have responded quite otherwise - and to an extent did. Yet this one strong thread of resistance and subtle attack had a major effect on the way things felt, and I think not only to me.**

**How do the quiet and the silent voices relate to the loud voices?**

**How can they be detected and valued? The base group feedback process was designed to give them a chance, and I am sure most women spoke up in the base groups; but were all voices represented in the base group reports? I guess that was a question of who was facilitating. There were a few women who stood out as different in style. One of them would make separate, personal evaluatory speeches of an enthusiastic kind which tended to be laughed at by the others; another just felt to be separate, engaging with the others, yet in some way remaining contained within herself and not following the emotional movements of the group.**



There is such a thing as a group dynamic, but no such thing as a group mind, except in the sense of an acknowledged consensus which has been worked for and which somehow expresses or takes into account the different minds of individuals. Such consensus can be more or less easy to achieve. When it is difficult, this can be on account of two things, or a mixture of both: the inability or unwillingness of individuals to make a particular choice, wanting to have the penny and the bun, or a polarisation between individual choices within the group. Thus when we had to decide whether to end early, on account of the early departure of a substantial number of participants, because they had chosen to opt for more convenient flight schedules, some insisted that we should do the impossible, curtailing nothing and including everyone in everything, and complained at every choice or formula for compromise; others took a strong position one way or the other. Who, in this circumstance, was responsible for finding a way forward? In my theory, that responsibility was shared (and here responsibility is the flipside of respect). In practice, I kept trying different formulae and combined my final best offer with a process reflection, pointing out that it was not possible to meet every conflicting want, and that I could not make it so.

The result of the decision we did take was that our work on 'recovery and healing', which was of great importance, had to be curtailed, and some participants were left dissatisfied and with some raw emotions. I felt sorry for this, though only partly responsible. It was a consequence not only of my compromise proposal, but also, more fundamentally, of other people's choices over flights, or insistence that we should all be together for a full evaluation, which then necessitated the shortening of the other afternoon work. No-one, I now reflect, offered to share the responsibility for this lack of time for the question of healing.

One might expect that trainers in training would more readily accept co-responsibility, but in my more general experience, trainers 'on holiday' like to behave as if they are on holiday, as well as competing with each other in knowing better than the trainer(s) for the workshop. In addition, this was a group, largely, of feminists, advocates and trainers for assertiveness. Maybe there was something of a contest as to who could be most assertive, with me as a kind of substitute male authority figure! I need to bear these possibilities in mind when I try to estimate how much of the dynamic within this group of participants, and between them and me, was or was not

a question of culture, historic relationships or race, or related to aspects of my behaviour. Maybe the African-European relationship was to some extent a focus or cover for some more universal class-teacher dynamic. (I am acutely aware of how far this is all a matter of speculation - and maybe projection - on my part.)

I also find it interesting to speculate whether antagonism towards the European organisation and leadership of the workshop played a role in unifying potentially conflicting elements within the group, for instance the French and English speaking subgroups. In the final evaluation one participant (the usual one), complaining about the standard of translation, and describing what she saw as the lack of care taken over it as an insult to Africans, laid the blame for linguistic barriers in Africa at the door of colonialism: a view which seems to me to be at least over-simple.

The inadequacy of our session on recovery and healing also confirmed for me the subject's importance. I need to think more about it. One thing that became clear inside me that afternoon was that I was tired of running 'introductory workshops' - while still acknowledging their usefulness - and longed to do more in-depth work on specific aspects of peacemaking. Recovery and healing would be one such aspect.

## **Evaluation**

Our final evaluation was done both in base groups and in plenary. The casework of the final morning, with action plans and role-plays, was very positively evaluated. Assessments of the whole week were appreciative of the workshop's overall style: my 'allowing problems to be aired' and responsiveness to participants' needs, my 'knowledgeable and articulate' facilitation, my approach and methodology, in particular the participatory processes used; the practical usefulness of the knowledge generated 'for day to day conflicts' through the opportunity in groupwork to look at real conflicts from the participants' own experience. There had been 'much learning of fundamentals.'

There were, however, some apparent contradictions which I found puzzling. In spite of the sense of solid and useful learning, of new and practical knowledge, there were still complaints about a lack of theoretical grounding. One group saw this as a question of time, suggesting that the balance had been right and that different

aspects of the work, including theoretical, would need to be developed in follow-up workshops. This made sense to me; and I want to consider seriously the idea that a more theoretically structured opening would be helpful. One group said that the issue of power and justice had not been adequately handled. Since the daily evaluations on this part of the workshop content had been entirely and enthusiastically positive, I can think of three possible explanations of this criticism: one, that the subject was of such importance that the time available was experienced as insufficient (but this feeling was not expressed in the daily feedback); the second, that it was considered impossible that a European could understand these issues, and therefore impossible that these sessions could have been adequate; the third, that our brief exploration of the choice between violence and nonviolence had provoked feelings which were not dealt with. From the subsequent remarks of Mbiya (one of the two African staff-participants) and associated memories from our discussion during the workshop, I see reason to favour this last explanation. My description of nonviolence thinking was intended to be descriptive rather than prescriptive, but I also made it clear that our purpose in this workshop was to examine and develop nonviolent rather than violent strategies and methods - which was of course well known, but may still have been felt as some kind of put-down of violent struggle and therefore of struggle itself. (This is one of those 'swimming in treacle' areas where all the explanations in the world seem to communicate little when people from the old colonial nations are talking with those who have been colonised.)

Another area of complaint was that I had not adequately 'contextualised' my material. I had tried repeatedly to explain that I, not being African, was deliberately choosing non-African examples, on the whole (though certainly not mostly European) to illustrate what I was presenting, on the understanding that the participants were the Africa experts and it was for them to bring in their own experiences and examples, and to test and apply the models and theories under discussion in relation to their own examples. For me this was very much an issue of respect: to know the limits of my own expertise and competence and to acknowledge theirs - as I explained. I considered it would be of interest to them to hear, for instance, of struggles for justice in other parts of the world, illustrating the universal dimension of some issues and experiences. Instead, it was taken, by some at least, as a measure of my lack of interest in African experience - or maybe simply of my ignorance. (Earlier in the week, the 'ice-berg' diagram I had used to delineate the processes needed for problem solving had been felt by one group to be inappropriate for Africa. I had half-expected

this response, but told myself not to be silly, since we all occupied the same planet and I probably live no closer to ice-bergs than Africans do.)

The last complaint about the workshop content, which came from one group, was that I had failed to respond to repeated requests for a gender focus. Here I realised - and explained - that I should perhaps have told the whole group about my conversation with the one woman who had repeated the request, but that I had thought she spoke only for herself. In practice, I think the women were free to work as much as they liked on gender issues, and did so when they chose.

The evaluation of practical and organisational arrangements surrounding the workshop was much as could be expected, though by now delivered in a more measured way. The criticism of the translation provision was new and felt harsh. In particular, I felt for the two interpreters who were obliged to translate the view that they needed to improve their fluency! Much of the feedback delivered during the week could, from my cultural perspective, have been described as brutally frank. Whether this had to do with African culture or with feminist assertiveness training I cannot tell. It had the great advantage of clarity and the drawback of bruising; though the tendency to be bruised may also have been cultural. (I think not, though, when I recall reactions to Kirsty and Jen.)

#### **Final morning**

Thursday evening had brought the surprise arrival of two participants from Burundi. We had all been extremely worried about their apparent disappearance in transit, and although their coming was now really too late to be useful, we were relieved and delighted to see them, and they received a very warm welcome. They were eager to learn what they had missed (and it seemed to me unwilling, quite naturally, to accept that they had missed it), so our eventual plan for the final Saturday morning was to use it to run through the week's learning, which process could serve as a useful digestion and clarifying procedure for those who had been there, at the same time as informing the Burundians. However, when morning came, several women came to me and said they wanted to go shopping in Harare instead, mentioning that they thought the Burundians had business in Harare too. When I spoke to the Burundians they said they had made a tentative appointment in the hope that I would agree to run our

session in the afternoon instead. By this time I was almost too tired to function. The thought of having to stagger through a rather dense and intense morning had already seemed fairly daunting, and I knew I could not keep myself in a state of alertness till the afternoon. I also saw no reason why I should adjust yet again; so I said no, adding that if the other women were willing to take the process on, I would be prepared to be called in as and when needed to help with explanations or clarifications. This last idea was then adopted, but in fact, when it came to it, one of the Burundian women retired to her room unwell, and the other said she was too tired to work, so the whole thing dissolved, with my Malagasi friend (and she was, curiously, also a friend and the one who organised my lovely scarf gift and accompanying thank-you card) almost the only one left to disapprove of the whole sorry procedure.

### **Coping with fatigue; self-care**

I found it an immense effort to resolve to describe this last episode, the exhaustion and need to give up which I felt at the end of the workshop being replicated now, as I write my account: which brings me to the question of self-care. I allowed myself to moan to my training colleagues, be bought drinks and generally be clucked over, and accepted whatever help could be offered by them, in terms of sorting flipcharts and preparing handouts and diagrams. I tried not to work inordinately late, and drank an unusual amount of whiskey, which I sometimes followed with paracetamol tablets (self-care indeed), in a vain attempt to sleep in spite of the presence of noisy, frightening insects, and the endless activity of an overtired brain. On the Wednesday, our half day, Jen insisted that Kirsty and I went into Harare, with only a little business to do at the travel agent's, and spent the rest of the day wandering around, drinking coffee and eating an excellent dinner in a very comfortable hotel. The overall stress of lone facilitation in that particular context I could not avoid; but once the groupwork was well established, I was able to slip away to my room for odd minutes, just to be on my own, and walk around in a relaxed support capacity. I also managed to accept that I could do no more than my best in a situation not of my choosing, to keep calm and internally relatively still, and take things as they came. I kept my journal writing to a minimum, noting only things I was afraid I might forget, and tried not to worry my head about understanding what was happening - only to notice and be alive to feelings and insights within myself.

## **After the workshop**

**On the final Saturday afternoon I sat under the trees with Jen and Kirsty and we unloaded our feelings together. Then I asked them for their feedback on the workshop content. Jen, as training manager, was clear that the organisation would want to include my power and justice material (and indeed the whole workshop) in their manual and in future workshops, seeing it as a vital element in conflict prevention (a phrase which I have since added to the final stage in my diagram), which in turn is central to the organisation's work. She said it also brought wholeness to the concept of conflict transformation and corresponded to participants' realities. She believed that my 'power and conflict resolution' model provided a strong framework for the construction of such workshops, and that the analysis it represented would be supported by the rest of the organisation's staff, from their own concerns and experience. She was also of the opinion that the models and exercises which I had used had been 'excellent'.**

**The assessment of the workshop's content and the material used had been intended as my primary research focus for this workshop. In the event, I found (and still find) it difficult to give this evaluation the weight that I want to. The emotional content of the workshop's dynamics tends to overwhelm everything else. Yet I should recognise that my understanding about what constitutes the basic mix of ingredients, the scope, of such an introductory workshop, and in particular the inclusion of power and justice issues (and, which was less of a conscious focus, of the question of healing) was strongly vindicated, along with the related materials, models and processes that I had selected and developed.**

**After my return to England I received similarly positive feedback from Cleo, when she had heard my verbal account. She was familiar with the proposed workshop content and agenda, which in the event I had adhered to almost entirely, in the light of the positive daily evaluations. She saw it as I had framed it for the manual: as one arrangement of essential basic elements, adding, as I had done, that it would be up to individual trainers in a given context to construct a workshop shaped and proportioned to the needs of a particular group of participants.**

I have noticed that my feelings and overall impression of the workshop have kept slipping into a persecution frame, with me and my colleagues as victims, and the workshop as a failure; and yet, when I look at my notes and push my memory to sharpen itself up and become specific, I see that there was much that was affirmative and that, by and large, the workshop could be considered a success. I will not have been helped by my tendency to see things which are not perfect as disastrous, nor by my personal need for gigantic dollops of reassurance. Being somewhat obsessive about questions of justice, I not surprisingly found it difficult to be associated, as it felt, by geography and race, with colonialism and oppression, and experienced this as persecution. Whereas the group clearly experienced me as powerful, on account of my role and Europeanness, I was more aware of their power and my isolation, both functional and racial/cultural. Their power was not only numerical, but moral, or quasi moral: they occupied, as it seemed to me, the moral high ground of belonging to the historical victim group. And all these constructions were ones which I had aimed to avoid, or at least minimise, by working with Cleo, by using base groups to devolve power, and by working with a largely elicitive process.

My debriefing with Cleo was important to me. Knowing that she had wanted to work with me had been a very affirming thought, even in her absence. As I talked to her about what had happened, I explained, unnecessarily, that this was only one person's perspective: that she would need to ask others' views, for instance Faith and Mbiya's. She replied, very firmly, that it was my perspective that she cared about and trusted. Whether this was wise in Cleo must be open to doubt, but it was very good to hear.

I had been unhappy with myself that, although I had given as one of the workshop assumptions the notion that at times our own process should be the focus or our learning, I had not fully lived up to that promise. I had allowed the anger of participants to be voiced in that plenary session, and had provided channels for ongoing feedback through the basegroup and plenary evaluations, but I had not named or confronted what I saw as the lack of care and respect which I felt in some of the attacks made on Kirsty and Jen, when it was care and respect that were being demanded; or the behaviour of participants towards kitchen staff, when issues of justice were so high on the agenda. I did make some reference to these things, the morning after the turbulent plenary, noting to the group that the ways in which we expressed differences amongst us provided us with material for learning; but I did not, as the week progressed, make explicit my interpretations of the underlying

dynamics within the group, or raise them for discussion. In the case of the attack on Jen and Kirsty, I felt that to make my judgements known would conflict with my function as mediator/facilitator; and in the wider matter I judged it as beyond my power to raise the matter in such a way that my interpretation would be understood or taken seriously, or would not be felt as the final affront and demonstration of incomprehension. It felt to me like a choice between completing a clearly useful agenda and falling into chaos and recrimination - and any constructive approach to conflict or education needs to be based on a realistic assessment of likely outcomes.

I had shared my concern and checked my assessment with Jen and Kirsty during the workshop, and did so now with Cleo. She, as they had done, supported my judgement at the time and dismissed my doubts. In her view, I, as a single, European trainer, could not usefully have confronted what was happening: that maybe the two of us could, had she been there - though then the dynamic might have been quite different. I still wonder, though, as I write. One problem is that it is with distance that things seem to become clearer - both what was actually happening and what responses could have been made. For instance, had I been clearer sooner about the role being played by the Malagasi participant, I could have asked her privately what was going on between us. This could have had an impact on the dynamic. It would not, however, have provided an opportunity for the whole group to reflect and learn.

Cleo found it strange that participants had been individually supportive of me, yet sometimes hostile in the group (and it was certainly, in some cases, the same people). She believed this must have been on account of the dynamics between the participants themselves, perhaps a need to prove something to each other. She found it ridiculous that there had been an objection to the 'iceberg' model, and felt that participants could have been expected to accept that my role was not to attempt to supply the African material for them, but to make a space for them to reflect upon it.

I have thought much about the repeated complaint about the perceived 'lack of contextualisation'. In the first place I could not have done otherwise than I did, since I am not an Africa expert and had expected Cleo to fill that role if necessary. Secondly, I still find my logic sound: that the contextualisation was best done by the participants; and this was proved to work well in practice. Yet I cannot ignore the objecting voices. They came from a wonderful group of women, deeply committed to ideals that I share. I have reached three explanatory hypotheses. One is that they



needed me to give African examples first, not in order to build conceptual bridges, as they claimed, but emotional ones: bridges that would have given me credibility in their eyes.

When I shared this theory with my daughter, she remarked that if I had attempted to do this, I might possibly have succeeded in building a bridge, or, more likely, exposed myself to metaphorical gunfire by trying to cross one. That remains an important question for me, along with the twin one of authenticity: I should have felt artificial if I had tried to obtain credit by seeming to be familiar with experiences of which I could know only relatively little. Maybe that means I should simply stay and work at home. When I said this to Cleo, she responded that separation was not the answer: 'We have to get beyond these things.'

My second tentative explanation of this insistence on 'contextualisation' is that people who have suffered oppression and belittlement need affirmation, in this case the affirmation of having the importance of their own experience validated by its use in examples. I possibly caused unwitting offence by seeming not to think African experience sufficiently significant to be cited (with the exception of South Africa, which is already viewed with some suspicion by other African countries as being Westernised and the favourite of the West). I have found that West Europeans (and indeed East Europeans) in my workshops have been keen to be given examples from other continents and cultures. I have the impression of having met some resistance to this universalise approach in Beirut, and at times in the former Soviet Union. I imagine this has something to do with how much the people concerned are feeling the need to assert their own identity and place in the world.

Jen, Kirsty, Mbiya, Faith and I had a further evaluation meeting once we were all back in England. Mbiya and Faith had remained silent during the plenary evaluations in Harare. During the workshop generally, I had found them very supportive, Mbiya volunteering to do much of the French flipchart writing for us, and Faith playing a constructive and in some ways bridge-building role in plenary discussions. When it came to this meeting in London, however, whereas Jen had hoped they might offer some sort of bridge perspective - organisational at the same time as African - in fact they held very firmly to the viewpoints expressed by the more vocal of the other participants. Mbiya's opening was, 'You've already had participants' evaluations. I don't have anything to add.' Such proved to be the case, for her and Faith, except

that Mbiya usefully raised the question of the sensitivity of nonviolence as a subject 'which cannot be neutral', and made the helpful suggestion, with reference to contextualisation, that participants could be invited to write pieces about their own conflict experience, for circulation in advance. Along with other participants, they raised the idea of having a trainer in reserve, in case one has to withdraw. Otherwise they concurred with the points made in the end-of-workshop evaluation. When Kirsty expressed her puzzlement at the strength of the anger directed at her and Jen on the Tuesday evening, they were told in no uncertain terms how insensitive and provocative they had been, and Mbiya particularly laid emphasis on the negative impact of the inconveniences and discomforts of the venue. Overall, it seemed that, away from their African co-participants, they felt the need to stress their primary identification with them rather than with their employing organisation and colleagues.

I had one final opportunity to digest my Harare experience with the help of others. I had felt reluctant to talk about it in my CARPP group, afraid of challenging reactions from my British/ Afro-Caribbean colleagues, and doubtful of my capacity to handle them. When, in the event, the story came out in spite of my reluctance, their response was one of ready and eager understanding, both emotional and conceptual. I felt support for the content of my research, for my concern to bring issues of power and justice into the scope of conflict resolution, and to counter tendencies towards 'pacification' - the desire of the comfortable to avoid turbulence and challenge. They were interested in my dilemma as to whether or not I could or should have named what I thought was going on in the workshop dynamic, and what can prevent something from being named, or make its naming appropriate. They noted that the dynamics of power and justice my theoretical model was designed to represent had been played out in the process of the workshop. They saw the demands for greater luxury in the accommodation, and the treatment of kitchen staff as unjust, and noted that oppressors in this case seemed to have been rendered unassailable on account of the victim frame in which they had placed themselves and the complex power relations between the majority 'oppressed' (participants) and the minority (European facilitator and staff) 'oppressors'. This leaves me with much food for thought - and confirms for me the importance of our CARPP learning community as an external reference point.

**PS.**

**I sent the above account to Kirsty and Jen, who said that for them it described well the events and dynamics they had experienced; in Kirsty's words, 'You put into print all those things I couldn't formulate.' (I am aware that I did not dare give my account to Mbiya or Faith to read, and that, notwithstanding Cleo's reaction, their responses would probably have been very different.)'**

I later received a digest of written evaluations, which, along with the organisation's record of the final base group evaluations, provides a useful cross-reference for this account. It is interesting to note that the negative aspects of the individual evaluations are relatively slight in tone and proportion. I was left in no doubt about the usefulness of the workshop. All of the content material from Harare was subsequently incorporated into International Alert's 'Resource Pack'. It has also been used by participant African trainers working in Africa, who felt that the workshop had prepared them to become trainers in this field. At a conference in Oxford the following Autumn I was delighted to find that one of the speakers was a Somali participant, who described how in her work with women's groups she began by getting them to analyse the injustice they suffered, using a diagram with an inverted pyramid supported by pillars. The Goss-Mayr models have clearly travelled well!

I think what I learn from this whole experience now, at two years' distance (apart from what punishing situations I allow myself to get into) is that that the 'cultural barrier', when there is one, is less about the substance of what is on offer, or even the pedagogical approach, than about interpersonal perceptions and relationships which are at the same time more than personal, carrying, inevitably, an enormous amount of historical, political and economic baggage. In other words, it is a barrier created by the experience of (and response to) power relations. That probably applies in interethnic relations generally; it certainly, in my experience, seems to apply in the relationship between facilitator and participants.

## ANOTHER CONTINENT

In some ways the African and European workshops described in this chapter seemed worlds apart. The contrast in settings could hardly have been greater, nor the participants more different. The Harare participants were mostly professional trainers, and the workshop was designed to help them add to their existing knowledge and skills. The Moscow seminar was planned as one in a series, the first in an ongoing project for 'training and supervision', offering a new form of support for people living in areas of ethnic tension and attempting to play some kind of bridge-building role. The seminar in Warsaw (and a later one in Minsk) were part of the same series, with the same group of participants.

In Harare the participants were all women, and I had come under fire for not focusing exclusively on women's issues. In the Moscow and Warsaw workshops, both the participants and the team were mixed in terms of gender, and I re-lived some of the tensions I had experienced during my first workshop in Rostov, as a feminist in a 'macho' culture. Here, however, I felt less isolated among my colleagues in my response, since the wider team had women members; and some of the women participants were quite powerful, if reticent in plenary sessions.

As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, the tensions involved in my work in Moscow and Warsaw both echoed and differed from the South-North tensions experienced in Harare. I think that differences over teaching-learning styles were greater, while sensitivities about power and neo-colonialism were less - but still present. Whereas in Harare we had planned to have an African-European facilitation team, and I had ended up working alone, in the Moscow and Warsaw workshops we were a threesome: German, Russian and English. This brought its own difficulties, and the greatest tensions were felt not between facilitators and participants, but within the facilitation team itself.

The Harare workshop had been seen by all concerned as an important opportunity for French and English speaking Africans to meet. Similarly, plans to bring former Soviet citizens together with participants from central and eastern Europe in the Moscow and Warsaw workshop were based on

the idea of an exchange of different experiences and viewpoints. In the event it became clear that to bring together the two different parts of the post-Communist world was problematic, in that participants from the two regions faced very different situations and types of conflict, as well as having very different skills.

The theoretical content of the Harare workshop had clearly been a strength. In Moscow I made no specific theoretical input, but in Warsaw I used the 'stages' diagram in a presentation, and elaborated my related ideas about roles which can be played at different stages of conflict. As in Harare, I asked for and received evaluative feedback from colleagues, explicitly as part of my research. The question of contextualisation which had been raised in Harare came up again in Warsaw.

Although the European workshops were less stressful than the one in Harare, I still had my work cut out to keep steady, and alert to my own reactions and behaviour. I have compared the task of describing and interpreting events at Balaton, with all the emotion that that represented, and describing and interpreting the workshops in this chapter, and tried to put my finger on the difficulty I have experienced with the latter. What I have come to realise is that at Balaton I was in the role of mediator and supporter, whereas in Harare, Moscow and Warsaw I was, however unwillingly, a party to the conflicts that took place, so that holding a perspective which embraced different points of view was much more difficult.

## MOSCOW AND WARSAW

The project which embraced the Moscow and Warsaw workshops was jointly 'owned' by three different organisations: one in Berlin, one in Moscow and one in London. I was employed on a freelance basis by the London-based organisation. I understood that the lead organisation in Berlin had a research interest in the project, but thought that the focus of their research was the efficacy of the proposed form of support: of creating a group out of individuals and group representatives from many different situations and organisations in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union,

and offering them periodic seminars for training and supervision. To me this was an interesting model, offering an opportunity for the sharing and comparing of skills and experiences and understandings, as well as for ongoing support; potentially efficient in terms of time and money, giving something to be taken back to many regions and groups.

My Moscow account was written longer than usual after the event (though from extensive notes made at the time), since at one stage I had thought to exclude this project from my research, as it was not described as a training project. I later decided that the distinction between support and training was more about form than function, and that what I was learning from these workshops was too relevant to exclude. Since the account I eventually wrote seemed, on re-reading, to be rather 'dead' and tedious in parts, I decided to summarise some of it but to reproduce other parts in full, when they seemed significant. Names and organisations are, as usual, disguised.

## MOSCOW

### Background to the project

The Moscow account begins with a detailed description, which I shall summarise, of the first full planning meeting I attended in Berlin. That meeting seemed important to record and reflect then, and to outline here, because of the issues which came up. One theme which reappeared was the question of western intervention: how it was meant and how it would be perceived. This project was intended to be supportive in character, rather than didactic, the basic assumption being that the participants would already be experienced practitioners. However, the word 'supervision', which had initially been chosen to describe the form of support being offered, came under scrutiny. I raised a concern that in view of its double meaning in English (ie hierarchical and normative *and* egalitarian and supportive), with the additional complication of translation, the concept was likely to be misunderstood and to seem dangerously colonial. It was decided, after discussion, to describe what we proposed as 'support', rather than supervision, and Friedrich, the head of the Berlin

organisation and project co-ordinator, subsequently adopted the phrase 'facilitated self-reflection', which I had produced while groping for some useable term.

Other familiar questions reappeared for me in this meeting: questions which had raised themselves so forcibly in Israel/ Palestine and in Geneva, about the context and framing of work I am employed to do, and the extent and limits of my responsibility for them. In this case I was included in the project planning, as indeed I had been for the Geneva workshop, but not at Neve Shalom. In the case of Geneva, the problem lay in broken agreements. This time there were initial confusions and gaps in my knowledge, and later conflicts of view and interest. My account describes the discoveries I made about the variety of research agendas being attached to this project, and the conflict this provoked. I and the Swiss supervisor who had been engaged by the Berlin organisation took the line that no research agenda should be allowed to interfere with the way in which the project's primary objective of support was carried out. The meeting was an explosive one, leading to the supervisor's withdrawal from the team.

### **The facilitation team**

Team work and co-facilitation are part of my 'respect' focus, and they were a constant issue in this project. The co-ordination of roles and responsibilities had already proved difficult, but there was more difficulty to come. The other core team member, Vasily, head of the Moscow partner organisation, having suffered a slight heart attack, was not present at our first planning meeting, but was represented by Tanya, his assistant. Friedrich, who knew Vasily, had doubts as to his capacity or inclination for the kind of facilitation needed for this project; but he had been recommended by a mutual colleague, who thought he was flexible enough to learn from the experience, as well as bringing undoubted regional expertise. Friedrich and I had a meeting with him a month or so later, which started with apparent noncommunication but ended quite well. When I finally wrote up my notes about that meeting (after completing my report of the second seminar in Warsaw) I reflected on subsequent experiences of the dynamic between Friedrich and me and Vasily, and made the following observations,

**'I recognise a pattern in the flow of our planning meetings: proposal, counter-proposal, re-explanation of original proposal, incorporation of elements of counter-proposal, and collapse or evaporation of resistance - or positive agreement. I realise now that, quite apart from natural sympathies and culture, Friedrich and I had already, by our first meeting together with him, become 'we' and Vasily 'him' - by the fact of his absence at the first planning meeting. This division has remained, and indeed become more pronounced.'**

When it came to the Moscow seminar itself, the division was not only about points of view, but working style and process. The account continues with a discussion (quoted directly from my journal) of the ways in which I did and did not see this friction as a cultural issue:

**'Vasily has found Friedrich's and my need to plan for hours, in detail, with care, ridiculous, and has been hard to plan with. He has an idea and says 'This is what we should do' and can't see a need for anything more. In the workshop process he sees instruction as very important - top down - and so do most of the Former Soviet Union participants. He and Tanya had changed [because of earlier workshops they had been involved in], have changed and are changing. Do Friedrich and I need to change too - value more their ideas: more authoritarian and teacherish, having more input?'**

I think now that I was wrong in bracketing Tanya with Vasily. It became clear that she had a very different perspective and character. Of Vasily I wrote,

**'I think his attitude is part of a cultural lack of care for the individual - less of what I would call respect. Does this mean more respect for something else, for instance for authority?'**

What I meant was that the source of his style of behaviour was a mix of individual personality and Russian culture. The society by which he was shaped did not value individual needs and sensitivities, and certainly did not encourage men to do so. (Tanya's very caring ways, clearly part of *her* personality, may also have been influenced by social expectations, in this case about women.)



At the end of the week I added in my journal,

'Friedrich's and my contretemps [see later] with Vasily sharpens my dilemmas over cultural respect - though I think part of the trouble is that Vasily is autocratic and arrogant, as well as clever, friendly and entertaining. Tanya observed that Friedrich's and my style of work was a 'form of conflict resolution behaviour', ie a model of it. She also saw that to do things in a consultative way - the 'conflict resolution way' - took lots of preparation during the evenings of the seminar - which was what Vasily couldn't stand or understand. As Tanya also said, "Vasily can't be like you."

As I have since reflected, this division in the core team embodied in a very immediate way the clash between didactic and elicitive styles which constitutes an important challenge for respect in cross-cultural training: one which had already presented itself in Rostov, at the beginning of my research, and which came up again in Harare. The irony is that an insistence on non-hierarchical ways of working, which respect the existing expertise of participants, can also be hierarchically imposed and seem disrespectful in relation to preferred approaches to teaching and learning. In the same way Friedrich's and my democratic approach to planning was experienced by Vasily as an imposition on him of unreasonably arduous and lengthy preparation sessions. Here again, it is hard to distinguish between individual disposition and cultural norms. Practically speaking, both need to be acknowledged, and in that sense respected. Is it also desirable that they should both be challenged, and am I, in turn, ready to be challenged on both counts?

## **Evaluation**

One of my criteria for respect is the usefulness of what is offered to workshop participants. My account continues with a discussion of the qualified success of the 'self-reflection' sessions, and the conclusions reached in our team evaluation at the end of the week - from which Vasily had chosen to absent himself:

'Tanya likened our idea of 'facilitated self-reflection' to 'a black cat in a dark room' - a difficult new concept which still needed further explanation and experience to be fully understood. Some people

still expected a more 'normal' seminar, and wanted to be given answers. They needed to be convinced of the value of what we were offering. This raised again the question of learning styles and expectations, and who knows best what is good for participants: they themselves or we in the planning and facilitation team - and which participants and which team members? As Friedrich said also, our 'contract' was 'not quite clear.' Who defined the project? We had given the idea that we would follow 'their' needs, but we were convinced that 'facilitated self-reflection' was the best way of doing that, and not everyone was in agreement with us.'

We noted, however, that in the participants' evaluation, although some of them did express a desire for more theoretical input and more training, and substantial case studies, it was clear from what they said that they had all greatly appreciated the supportive function of their exchanges in the self-reflection sessions; the understanding they had received from each other, and the knowledge that others were in many ways in the same boat and confronted by comparable challenges.

I observed that many of them had seemed confused about their own roles and possibilities, given their identity and context: preoccupied with the assumed need for impartiality, when in fact many of them were working as advocates. This gave me the idea that some clarifying discussion about stages and roles in conflict (my developing theory) would be helpful at our next workshop.

Other evaluation points included the question of women's participation. Anita observed that in the reflection groups which she had observed, the women had opened up and the men had given them advice! And in plenaries men had done most of the talking.

### **More about teamwork**

My Moscow account concludes with a description of an abortive attempt by Friedrich and me to use the time without Vasily (which we had not chosen, but which was imposed on us by his decision to break his agreement to spend the week-end planning with us) to get ahead of him and get some control over him. We were committed to working with him for at least one more seminar,

but wished to preserve the integrity of the project; and we did not want our work in the next seminar to entail so much stress, for him or us. We used the morning and afternoon of that day to draft an outline agenda for the next seminar (since we would not all have the chance to meet before it). We tried to think strategically about Vasily's role: how to honour his potential to contribute, while curtailing his potential to make more difficult, or less effective, the things that we wanted to do and which were really outside his interest or competence.

We devised a week plan which pleased us greatly: one which combined the various elements which had arisen from the participants' evaluation and been confirmed by the 'team', framing it also in terms which linked it to Vasily's own promises to the participants in the final plenary (promises made off the cuff and without any prior discussion with Friedrich and me, let alone the rest of the team). The elements we included were: a process to integrate new participants (for instance those who had been invited and unable to come this time); facilitated self-reflection; a case study or case studies offered by us, and an opportunity to look at their own successes and failures in their work; some theoretical and methodological input; some skills training; more games (to keep up energy and provide some fun) and an exploration of ideas for any continuation of the project. This seemed an ambitious wish list for five days. However, we noted that several of these elements could in practice be combined: for instance, theory, case studies and training. We felt we had a winning formula.

In the event, we found that Vasily had used his own time strategically. As we sat down to dinner that evening he produced a document for us to read. In it, he expressed his irritation with the week's proceedings: both our planning process and the content, and made various statements about what was needed next time. Although the construction he had put on the week's events felt somewhat insulting to Friedrich and me, we found we could nonetheless relate our plan to his comments and proposals and proceeded to do so. So as had happened before, after some bad moments we cobbled together an agreement with Vasily not at all unlike the one we had planned.

I found (and still find) this episode funny and rather shaming. At a distance I was able to see it as a rather extreme form of the regular pattern of our negotiations. When we met again in Warsaw, we

found the strategy Friedrich and I had devised for both honouring and 'containing' Vasily worked well, even if it was a sign of our having fallen short of the ideal. I think that is something I need to reflect on: pragmatism versus idealism in the living out of respect: respect for human fallibility - my own and others'.

## Gender note

In the more detailed version of the above 'team' episode included in my account, I made the following comment:

**'I should confess here that I left the lead negotiating role to Friedrich. He clearly feels more powerful to Vasily, both as an equivalent academic male (my construction) and as the head of the lead organisation involved. I felt something like an orphan, since my two former colleagues at the organisation employing me had left, and I had been left to do this piece of work without any real organisational backing.'**

When I think about this now, I realise that there really is a gender issue for me here, if not for my colleagues. I often think of myself as being indignant about what I perceive as sexism, but do not often admit to being intimidated by gender relations, and I think that in relation to my role in this team I was intimidated, in spite of excellent working relations with Friedrich, even if was only by my own projections.

Our ability to cope respectfully with uneasy working relationships were to be further tested in the New Year, when we worked together again, with largely the same group, in Warsaw. I was well prepared for this workshop, in terms of my research, and chose to focus on my theoretical contribution and on my respectfulness as a facilitator.

## WARSAW

Although in terms of my research focus I was prepared for Warsaw, in terms of physical and emotional energy I was not so well-placed. The workshop came hard on the heels of the Harare training for trainers, and I was in no condition for it - nor for the extreme cold of Warsaw in January. Compared to Harare, the Warsaw workshop was not unreasonably taxing, but the combined impact was physically overwhelming. So much for self-care - again.

### **Research preparations; sources of feedback and evaluation**

As I had done in Harare, I had made an advance request to colleagues for research feedback. In this case I asked my three colleagues from Berlin - Anita and Sasha (responsible for record-keeping and documentation respectively), and Friedrich, my colleague in the facilitation team. I had asked these three because I knew I would have time with them before and after the workshop; because they were all action researchers in my field, whose observations and assessments I would value, and because I felt I was on good, open communication terms with each of them.

Later, when I was writing my account of the workshop, I felt challenged to explain to myself why I had not asked my other core team colleague, Vasily, to give me feedback in the same way. There were practical reasons - like the fact that I had no chance to meet with him before the seminar and would not be travelling with him afterwards. More importantly, I think, we were not on sufficiently open terms for me to feel comfortable about asking this of him. And I would not have expected him to understand the personal focus (that is, the reflexive nature) of my research. When I first noticed that I had not considered asking him, I felt that I had limited the validity of my research findings in a way that I need not have done. However, when I think about it now, I recognise that Sasha provided one Russian voice for me; that my reasons for not asking Vasily were reasonable, and that in fact he - and Tanya - gave me some useful feedback as part of the team evaluation process which was no less valid for having come in that context. (In the same way Faith and Mbiya, who were not specifically invited to give me research feedback, since I did not know when I made my plans that

they would be at the Harare workshop, did give me plenty of feedback through our more general evaluation process.)

I have to consider that there may in both cases (ie the Harare workshop and the Moscow/ Warsaw project) have been a gravitation towards those I considered would see things somehow from my point of view, or at any rate evaluate me on my own terms. On balance, however, I think I chose sensibly and did not filter out other voices. In the end I have to make a subjective evaluation of feedback and judge whose feedback will be useful and important, in what context, on the basis of what I know about them. For instance, although I greatly respect Vasily's acumen and knowledge, I do not think he really understands 'training' as I understand and intend it; so I would not see him as the best judge of what I did as a trainer. He is also impatient of lengthy analysis after sessions. However, his viewpoint on my work was significant for me to consider, because he was my colleague and because of his own expertise in the field in which I work. And I have learned from this reflection that I want to be alert to any protective boundaries I place around myself.

As Anita, Sasha, Friedrich and I travelled by train from Berlin to Warsaw, I explained more fully to Anita and Sasha what I was asking of them (I had already talked about it to Friedrich at our planning meeting). I said I wanted feedback on the usefulness of my theoretical input, and on my behaviour as a colleague and facilitator in terms of respect. When they asked me what I meant by 'respect', I said I was interested to know what they meant by it and what they would identify in my behaviour that related to or clarified their meaning; that I wanted feedback both on what I actually did and how they interpreted it; and that I was exploring the meanings of respect in other people's understandings and cultures, as well as subjecting my own behaviour to scrutiny.

Having summarised the explanation of these feedback arrangements with which my account begins, I shall reproduce the rest of it in full, with added subtitles and occasional commentary. What I wrote about day one raises an issue which I touched on in Chapter Four, in my discussion of the purposes and content of workshops: the usually unspoken purpose or function of workshops in inspiring participants in their efforts for peace.

## **'Day one**

For a variety of reasons six of the eighteen participants were new, but they were quickly and easily absorbed into the group. The first day's work (which probably helped), after introductory procedures, was given to story-telling in small groups, facilitated by participants, illustrating experiences of success and failure, with the aim of reaching some general conclusions as to what can contribute to either. Although in some ways it felt, from the plenary reports and discussion, as if these conclusions were so numerous, and so similar to things said in the previous workshop, that they represented no real advance in generalised understanding, the day was highly valued by participants, who clearly found it inspiring. It has struck me recently that 'providing inspiration' is not usually included in explicit workshop objectives, but that it probably ought to be, if organisers are acknowledging participants' real needs, and that inspiration is very often, in practice, a product of such workshops.'

My account of the second day describes how my theoretical presentation went and the feedback I received on it, both during and after the workshop. I note now that my nervousness about the presentation (paragraph two) seems to have been to some extent related to gender. (I had not spotted this before, which demonstrates to me that this writing process is in itself a continuation of the research process). This was the occasion on which I was first obliged to think whether my 'stages' model was descriptive or prescriptive. From the account it is clear that my presentation was, as usual, laced with caveats and disclaimers, and that I thought a good deal afterwards about the issues raised for me in the discussion. My account is perhaps excessively detailed, and the recording of evaluative feedback is very long. However, since this was an important research cycle for the theoretical thread of my inquiry, I have decided not to cut it.

## **'Day two, morning session: theoretical presentation.**

The morning of the second day took the form of two sessions on 'theory and methodology of piecework: phases and constructive roles in conflict.' At the Moscow workshop participants had expressed a desire for more theoretical input, and had demonstrated a good deal of confusion as to roles in peacemaking. It had therefore been decided in the core team (Friedrich, Vasily and me) that I should present my

'snake' model as a rough outline of one route into and out of conflict, suggesting, as an adjunct, the possible roles that could be played by insiders and outsiders to the conflict at different points in its development.

I felt very nervous, given the high academic standing of both Friedrich and Vasily, and the critical nature of my audience - especially the men from the Former Soviet Union. Friedrich gave me a lot of encouragement in advance, and Vasily was very positive in the event. I said to Friedrich later that whereas I might appear confident, I was in some ways extremely insecure, so that speaking to certain audiences could cost me a lot of effort and courage. His reply was that he thought maybe that was where the impression of strength came from - an impression he was sure most people had of me. Ironical, if so.

I will not here give the content of my presentations, as it has already been presented in Chapter Two. In the first part of the morning I spoke of the growing criticism of approaches to Conflict Resolution which ignore questions of power and justice, of my own aims in relation to that deficiency, and of my additional criticism of what seemed a narrow and unhealthy emphasis on the role of third parties, and a consequent relative neglect of the possibilities for more constructive approaches by the conflicting parties themselves, or members of them. I introduced my model as representing not *the* route into and through conflict, but one way of representing one route, adding that, like all models, it would be a very approximate and imperfect description; that the stages represented would not, in practice, have clear boundaries; that the flow of events would not always be in the same direction; that in real life conflicts are not single, but multiple, in any society at any time; that there would be stages within stages, conflicts within conflicts, parties within parties; but that nonetheless I hoped that the processes represented, and their ordering, would bear some relation to participants' experiences, and prove a useful tool for thinking about them.

At several points in my presentation I used the example of South Africa, on the assumption that this would be a case broadly familiar to all participants. After the break I presented my ideas about roles, and outlined some possible criteria for choosing them. Both of these presentations seemed to hold participants' attention, and the level of engagement evidenced in the interesting discussions which followed them, and the positive remarks of participants, made me feel that they had been of



use - an aid to more conscious choice of action. One thing that became clearer to me in the discussion was that what to one person or group is oppression may to others appear as equity or even generosity: that what I have described as 'oppression' might be better described as 'perceived oppression'; and yet I feel that there are many situations, especially those characterised by major power discrepancies, where I would feel that oppression existed 'in fact'. This raised in turn the question of whether my model was descriptive or prescriptive - to which I replied that I thought it was a mixture of both. I need to think more about this. It seems to me that it is at the point of choice of values to uphold, and modes of behaviour to follow, that moral judgement is applied; but the words 'oppression' and 'reconciliation' have moral overtones, and the 'conflict resolution' grouping of processes could be seen as describing an ideal; though I believe that in practice those things very often happen, however messily, and perhaps without the final phases - which in my view are essential if future violence is to be avoided. In fact, of course, this model is designed for use in contexts where participants are engaged in a search for ways of reducing violence, so the context itself is, in a sense, prescriptive.

#### Later feedback on my theoretical presentation

In the evaluation that evening, within the extended team (including Sasha and Anita, as well as Friedrich, Vasily and me), Vasily said with conviction that he considered the morning to have been successful: 'a new step' in the group's level of understanding; that participants had been very interested, the discussion had been good, that the ideas presented had provided a challenge to people's thinking, and that the 'schema' I had used would be useful for them in the future. Sasha agreed that the morning's work had constituted a step forward and that it had been interesting, stimulating, for him and, as he had observed, the participants generally. Anita had some reservations about the general applicability of the first phase of the 'snake', but considered the categories of roles I had presented as 'spot on'. Friedrich was enthusiastic about the whole morning. He had been more or less familiar with the 'snake' model, and found it 'inspiring'. Now he was particularly taken with my differentiation of roles, and intended to use it in future. In addition to all this acclamation, Vasily announced that he planned to organise his case study presentation the following morning along the same lines, dividing it up between

analysis and action. I greatly appreciated this most sincere form of 'process' compliment from Vasily.

In the conversation I had with Anita at the end of the workshop, she expressed her concern that my 'snake' model came from a particular cultural viewpoint, which yet by its nature purported to describe something universal. (Here I feel the need to refer back to all the caveats and disclaimers in the preamble to my presentation.) I had not, she said, been imposing in the way I had presented it, and had been open to participants' responses, prepared to change and adapt it; but still my suggested model, my viewpoint, remained dominant within the session. She was clear that many participants had really liked the model, and that as I continued to amend and develop it could become 'even better'. Her question was how we could achieve equality in a situation of inequality. We had, she observed, been slow to 'bring anything in', and had offered this theoretical session only in response to repeated requests. It had been greeted by a feeling of 'How nice - at last! We can exchange'; and Anita was of the opinion that my model was 'better than anything they would have come up with'. At this I demurred, and Anita responded,

'At the personal level you're right: the participants could be respected by you for their theories, because you're more respectful than I am; but on the wider level.....Vasily gives in to us [on how to run the workshop] because we have the money and our ways are the up and coming ways.'

At this point I sighed out my now recurrent question: Can I do cross cultural training, with respect, at all as a North Westerner? Harare was still very fresh in my mind, along with many other accumulating experiences. Anita's response was a more down to earth version of Cleo's: 'But that's the situation and you may as well contribute.' I could, in her view (as I had done) choose a process of discussion and argument rather than a 'power process', one of imposition, and I could be open about the dilemmas of unequal relations at the structural level. Essentially I agree with her, though I see another potential dilemma in that in some cultures such openness would be unacceptable - another cultural imposition.

More generally, and on reflection, I find Anita's concerns both overstated and deeply challenging. In the context of the group in question, I would argue that the presentation of theory by the core team members was appropriate, wanted by the

participants and clearly found useful by them. I did not find them, either at that point or at any other time, over respectful, ie bowing to me or anyone else as an authority figure or out of politeness. As a group they seemed ready, indeed eager, to challenge. Vasily had given major input in Moscow, and did so again in Warsaw, so it was not disproportionately Western. Any input given by the leadership of any workshop can be seen as 'dominant', but it can nonetheless provide a spring-board for other ideas and be useful in itself. This is clear from participant responses. The challenge, as I see it, is to discover the best, most empowering balance between input and out-drawing. The issue of structural and cultural power relations remains, and Anita's point about Vasily's position contains at least some truth, I imagine.

Anita commented that it was good from a feminist point of view that I had made a major input at this workshop; and here I see much more of a problem in power relations within the workshop process. In my plenary session, as in others, most women remained silent, though in the groupwork they played a stronger role. Gender relationships at the wider social level seem to be replicated to a considerable extent within the group itself. More of this later.

Sasha's post-workshop feedback to me on my theoretical input was the same as he had given in that day's evaluation: that it had been useful, helpful, and that this had been proved by the discussion and feedback within the plenary.

Friedrich's later feedback was that, as he had also said earlier, he had found the 'snake' model and the 'roles scheme' - especially the distinction between partisan, semi-partisan and non-partisan roles, which was new to him - helpful and inspiring. He had also observed that they were helpful to participants. In particular he remembered the response one young and earnest participant, heavily engaged in very difficult and dangerous go-between work, and seeking, but resistant to, new ways of understanding things, who had found my ideas 'very helpful - the most eye-opening things'. Friedrich felt that had I had time to invite participants specifically to relate their own current experience to the model (as I remembered I had done in the Geneva workshop), rather than simply to discuss it in general, that would have maximised its usefulness (and put flesh on the bones, so avoiding the comment I remember one participant made, that the session had been 'a bit dry'). We had also planned to invite participants to refer to the 'phases and roles' outlines in our later case study, but, under pressure of time, forgot.

Friedrich agreed with my thesis that the usefulness of theory offered was a key factor in assessing the respectfulness of offering it. 'Applied science', he said, 'always has to apply these ethical standards of respect'. For instance, in medicine, which is applied science par excellence, the essential question was whether 'it works for ill people'. As regards my theory, the usefulness/ respect would depend on my enabling people to relate their activities to the 'scheme', and helping them to see what was appropriate for them to do in a situation. He saw my work as needing further development in this direction. (I developed a list of criteria for choice of role as one initial step.)

Friedrich made one other very useful observation. My presentation had, in his words, constituted

'something of an academic lecture, and one moves in the framework of certain paradigms. In the conflict intervention field you want to contribute to a paradigm shift, and therefore have to confront other people and their paradigms.'

He asked whether it is possible to challenge and still to respect, then answered his own question: 'Yes - so long as you make place for the old as well' - by which I assume he meant value it. That is a most appropriate reminder for me.

Day two, afternoon

So much for my theory session. It was followed, on that second afternoon, by the first of two half days devoted to 'reflection groups' based on the original idea of 'facilitated self-reflection.' The original idea had been that these sessions would provide an opportunity for participants to focus on their own current practice and any dilemmas, emotional, practical or analytical, which arose from it. Some participants, along with Vasily, had favoured a process more resembling a discussion group, looking at issues decided at the outset in accordance with the expressed interests of those who wished to take part. At this workshop, therefore, we used the name 'reflection group' to describe both this more generalised form of discussion forum and the original 'facilitated self-reflection', more akin to group supervision. Participants chose their group according to which 'core teamer' they wanted to work

with, knowing that Vasily's group would be for issue-based discussion. As it turned out, the groups were more or less equal in size.

The two sessions in these three groups were highly valued by all participants. I was struck that two of the men most engaged in political level mediation in violent situations, one of whom (Vladimir) had been doubtful, in Moscow, about the usefulness of this process, chose to participate in my group, and in their participation were extremely open about the personal and emotional dilemmas which confronted them. This seemed to me to represent something of a cultural transformation for men coming from a very macho society, where fear and vulnerability are taboo for males. I believe the space for this change was created by the women in the group: by their unapologetic openness about their own dilemmas and by their clear questions to their male colleagues. (I have just remembered that one other man was in the group, and that whereas he made quite useful analytical contributions, he steadfastly avoided using the opportunity to reveal anything about his own inner or personal world. I wonder why this was. Maybe his daily and inescapable vulnerability as a person with quite severe physical disabilities made him reluctant to expose himself in this voluntary way.) These sessions were moving and apparently very helpful for all concerned. This was confirmed in our team meeting and in participants' final evaluation, where these sessions were valued most highly of all. This was particularly gratifying for Friedrich, since the idea for what was then described as supervision was his, and one of the distinctive aspects of this project.

(Sasha was, with participants' permission, an observer in my group, recording our conversations for his own research purposes. In his post-seminar feedback to me, referring to my facilitation, he replied, 'You're always respectful. You're a respectful person.' He did, however, remember one instance in which I had been 'a bit like a teacher' in my response to one person's question to the group, in spite of my couching my remarks in terms of my own experience.)

The apparent increase in participants' enthusiasm for the 'self-reflection' sessions gives me more food for thought about cultural respect in terms of what to offer to a group - and indeed persist in. This was certainly something new, which had in some ways gone against the grain; and it seemed that our conviction that it would be of use (based on experience from within our own culture) was not mistaken.

The next day I was confronted again with the issue of gender. Rereading my account I consider my handling of it on this occasion as a sign of some progress.

### **'Day three**

On the third morning, Vasily's Chechnya case study presentation was received with great interest, and generated a good deal of comment and discussion - though dominated by the three men who had had some involvement in attempts to bring the violence there to an end. His list of 'criteria for action' stimulated a more generally participatory and lively discussion. He was clearly pleased with the way this, for him, new style of lecturing had gone, and with the positive feedback he subsequently received.

During the plenary discussion in his session, one of the men made a remark about the inappropriateness of 'taking women into some situations'. This remark was the occasion for sniggering among participants group. I felt a wish to say something, but the speaker looked embarrassed and had clearly been misunderstood - whatever he had meant and been understood to mean - and I let the moment pass. However, when later in the discussion I had an opportunity to address several points raised, I expressed my discomfort about the question of gender in relation to the matters under discussion, and also in relation to the dynamics within the group. I said that I appreciated that these were, among other things, cultural matters, and that when people were working in dangerous situations they had to know what would work and what would not; but that I longed for women to have the opportunity of contributing to the maximum of their potential, and that I wanted to register my unease with the status quo.

These remarks were heard with serious attention and followed by a strong contribution to the discussion by one of the women who worked in Chechnya, who described what she and her organisation were doing. In her final feedback to me, Anita said she considered my intervention as having been important in raising the group's awareness, and opening the floor for Marina. I have already recorded her remark that it was important that I, as a woman, was part of the core team and had 'given a lecture'. She observed, as I have done, that women tended to say little in plenaries, but were strong in smaller groups.'

The challenges of day four were related to the process Friedrich and I had chosen, and our handling of the facilitation it required. As with the 'facilitated self-reflection', we were steering participants through a process which they did not trust to begin with, but which seemed to prove useful in the end. I describe in some detail the process by which this end was achieved and reflect on the respectful use of a facilitator's power and knowledge, and the difficulty of distinguishing between manipulation and facilitation.

#### **Day four, morning**

After the free afternoon which followed, and the second round of reflection group sessions on the fourth morning, it was time for the second case study. This had been planned by Friedrich and me, and prepared with the help of two participants from Belgrade. They opened the session with an explanation, with diagrams, of the past, present and possible future situations in East Slavonia, where areas currently under Serb control and inhabited almost exclusively by Serbs, many of them refugees, are due to be handed over to Croatian control. They outlined some of the dilemmas and anguish which were likely to ensue.

After this presentation and subsequent questions, we invited the participants to divide themselves into three groups: one representing a Belgrade Peace organisation, one a Croatian peace network, and one a peace group in East Slavonia itself. Using the two Belgrade participants as consultants, these groups were asked to make an assessment of their own possibilities for making a constructive contribution in the situation described, and a corresponding set of action proposals to take to a joint planning meeting with the other two peace organisations. (We had intended to refer them back to the 'phases and roles' material of two days earlier, but amid time and information pressures sadly forgot. It would be good to know whether they would have clarified or complicated things. My feeling is that they would have been useful, and that the exercise would have been an excellent way of testing and digesting the theory; but to do it all thoroughly would have taken far more time than was available.)

Once these plans were drawn up, the groups sent two representatives each to the joint planning meeting, which took place in a 'fish bowl', with the other participants

watching. Norbert and I had thought this process would be more interesting than the usual group reports and would have the added benefit of some learning about the possible dynamics of intergroup co-operation. It worked reasonably well, but we really needed time for thorough de-briefing and discussion.

The final stage of this experiential case study was a role-play, which took place on the fifth and final morning. Each group was to take one small episode or event in one of the proposed lines of action, and enact it. This necessitated, initially, some further elaboration by each group of some element in their action plan which now felt realistic. When the groups were originally formed, Friedrich and I had asked them to make sure that at least one of their members would be able to facilitate a role-play. When it came to it, one of the three had been doubtful whether any of them would be able to do that, and we had observed that the two volunteer facilitators in another group were in fact hectoring and bullying the group in competition with each other. Only in the case of the third did we feel confident. We decided to facilitate the other two ourselves. For Friedrich, in the group with no self-identified facilitator, this presented no major problem, but for me, in the group with a self-identified facilitator, Ladislav, already in place (the other having by now left the seminar for an unavoidable appointment), this was a sensitive matter. I decided to approach the difficulty head on, explaining that we had decided to help with the facilitation because we did not have sufficient time to explain in detail what was required of facilitators. (This was true; and had there been time, I might have attempted an in-depth discussion with Ladislav about facilitation.) I said that nonetheless I felt like an intruder, and I hoped that the erstwhile facilitator and the others would accept my intervention.

They were courteous, Ladislav admirably gracious; but I also felt resistance. There had already been protests from participants, in the previous stage of the exercise, that it was all too unreal, that they lacked sufficient information and understanding of the real situation in East Slavonia to do it justice or come up with any sensible ideas - in spite of reassurances from the Belgrade members to the contrary - and that the simulation exercise was not serious and therefore disrespectful to the reality of the case. This resistance now resurfaced with a vengeance, and I used a combination of re-explanation, reassurance, acceptance of my own responsibility in asking them to trust me, together with active facilitation to elicit a clarification of existing ideas, to ease them through to the point of feeling they had a realistically useful and



practicable plan to form the basis for a role-play. I had not been sure whether we would manage it, and was first relieved and then delighted with the outcome. They really entered into the role-play when it came to it, and found it rich in learning, both about the feelings and difficulties involved for the different players, the behaviours which made the process easier or more difficult, and the circumstantial requirements of the type of mediatory meeting they had enacted. By the time we met up with the others for evaluation, resistance had been transformed into pleasure and satisfaction.

Anita, who had observed all this, told me in our post-workshop session, that as a facilitator I was in general 'almost excessively open to people's demands and recognising other people's wishes'. I also had an 'uncanny' feel or level of awareness of group dynamics. It was as if I could find my way in the dark, picking up things 'stunningly often' and finding a way of naming them in such a way as to confront them without occasioning affront. She had, however, an interesting observation to make about this particular occasion. She said that when I had come into the group and said 'I feel like an intruder' - naming what was going on - I had made it impossible for the others to object (or taken their objection away?), so that my respectful behaviour had at the same time closed their option to feel annoyed. For me this idea brings to mind the proverb that 'a soft answer turneth away wrath'. Are disarming behaviours in the end disrespectful, or is respect disarming? Is it bad to be disarmed? In this case, were people genuinely helped to feel content with my intervention, on account of my words and demeanour, or were they simply 'prevented' from voicing their continuing displeasure? Or again, did my words simply buy time so that the satisfactoriness of the process to remove any continuing resistance? Anita thought I should have named my intrusion as such and owned my decision to intrude. That to me would be to 'call a spade a fucking shovel' (to use a convenient proverbial metaphor); in other words to present my intervention in the most negative light. I was trying to point to an uncomfortable closeness between a helpful intervention and an intrusion, but to offer reasons for choosing the former framing. I think I am not such a purist as Anita, though I should be sorry to think I was manipulative. If my words brought difficult feelings into focus without dishonesty, and enabled them to be set aside, to useful effect, then I think I am satisfied. Nonetheless, I think there is a thin line between what I like to think of as my skilfulness as a facilitator, a helper of communication and process, and manipulation. I must watch it.

(I remember an occasion in Balaton - one which I failed to record in that account, though it is written in my journal - when a basegroup representative, during a discussion about free time, reported that someone in her group had remarked, 'We'll always end up doing what Diana wants us to do, because she's so nice and we'll end up wanting it too.' I was stunned, and immediately declared a free evening, adding only that if anyone really wanted to come back for a voluntary, additional role-play session, I would make myself available just in case. In the event, almost everyone came back! QED!)

Friedrich had had the same experience of having to overcome a good deal of resistance in order for the group to win through to a powerful role-play and sense of fulfilment. The third group had had its own particular difficulties, but in the end also managed to complete the task and felt good about the work. This raises for me a question more general than the one about my own particular ways of 'getting round' people. How far is it respectful to persuade people against their own judgement to go with a process, if as facilitator you feel pretty sure they will be glad in the end? My sense is that if one is honest in one's persuasion, and operates on the basis of consent, one is not violating the dignity or rights of participants, but respecting the responsibilities of one's own function.

#### **Final afternoon**

The first part of the final afternoon was given to special interest groups. I facilitated the one on research, and was asked at the end to describe my own research project. I was pleased and encouraged by the response: one of both interest and, more surprisingly, understanding. (I tend to consider my project too obscure and complicated to be readily understood. This particular group was composed almost entirely of women. I may be wrong, but I have the impression that, generally speaking, men have more difficulty in accepting the breadth of scope of my research, and its complexity, along with essentially shifting definition of its focal concept. I also find it difficult, but think that to hang on to all the complexity and unclarity is in itself required by respect for the nature of the beast.)

The final session was devoted to evaluation: a long and lively process in which all were involved, writing comments on cards and placing them, along a negative - positive continuum, on sheets of paper headed for the different sessions; this followed by a plenary round of overall comments. The results of this evaluation were contained no real surprises and were in line with the responses I have already recorded.'

Having completed my description of the workshop itself, I continued my account with a few reflections. To begin with the themes were familiar:

### **Teamwork; gender**

I should comment on working relations in the core team. I think Friedrich and I and Vasily worked together in a more mutually respectful and pleasant way, and with less tension, than last time. We had agreed roles in the leadership which reflected our different interests, styles and abilities, and keeping to those roles, working on different sessions, helped us all to be effective, reduced the hours needed for planning, and therefore the strain of over-work and over-complication. It also removed the contradictory moments which had flawed our leadership in Golitsino. We all made an effort in this accommodation - and probably all slipped at times. Certainly we all had our moments of irritation.

According to Anita and Sasha, Vasily seemed more like a kind of guest lecturer this time than a co-facilitator - which seems a fair description of the reality, and not in itself negative. The question remains for me, though, bearing in mind Anita's comments about dominant cultures, whether the formula we reached, which clearly enabled us to be more comfortable and effective than in Moscow, was a sensible one which respected our different styles and capacities, or one which failed to address some more fundamental issues relevant to the field of conflict and its resolution. When I think of the strength of Vasily's reputation and connections in both East and West, and his own success in raising funding, I find it hard to see him as oppressed; but no doubt he works within certain constraints.

In relation to the gender/ power issue, I should perhaps comment that Anita thought that, between Friedrich and me, Friedrich appeared as 'the boss' and I as his co-

worker. Sasha, on the other hand, felt participants saw Friedrich and me equally as 'the main carriers' of the workshop, and that Friedrich seemed finally 'the main one' not because of the way we worked together, but because he was the head of the Berlin organisation which was the prime mover in the project. I also noted to Friedrich that I dislike doing the more formal bits of facilitation (fear of getting things wrong): welcomes, thanks, official framings. He, on the other hand, enjoys doing them, and this affected our division of labour. Does it matter, I wonder?

### **Self-care**

A note on self-care: I went to Warsaw in a state of exhaustion, too soon after Harare - which had come later than originally intended, in order to accommodate Cleo, who then was not able to be there. It was extremely cold in Warsaw, and I went on an outing when I already had the beginnings of a cold, not realising how much time would be spent outside, how ill I would feel, or how late I would get home. I at no point thought of asking for a taxi. As the week wore on I slept less and less, being always overtired from preparation work, and disturbed by the enormous noise from the partyings of participants which grew louder and later (till four o'clock in the morning) as the week progressed. I thought I should not complain, as this seemed a pleasure to everyone else. I already felt I was failing to be a sociable and fun-loving member of the group, by going to bed 'early'. The lack of sleep, and the hard work of the days, made my cold worse, as did the horribly smoke-filled atmosphere of almost all our leisure spaces. Again, this seemed to suit others, and I did not wish to be entirely unsociable. I did explain my noise and smoke dilemmas to fellow team members as an after-thought in our final evaluation, and they felt I should have spoken up for myself. Too late! By the time we reached a freezing Warsaw railway station on departure day, I felt terrible. Completing the journey home was a nightmare, and I was ill for the next two weeks and more. Another resounding self-care success!

If questions of role and gender and self-care are old ones, the thought in the following paragraph represented, I think, quite a new angle on the theme of respect, though it has resonances with my experiences in Harare.

## **'Respect and reciprocity**

**On the train on the way home, Anita allowed herself to express pent-up displeasure at the sexist and, to her, objectionable attitudes and behaviour of many male participants, and the collusiveness of many of the women. She recognised that this was a question of differing social and cultural norms, but expressed her frustration:**

**'We're always supposed to respect other people's culture, but why shouldn't they respect mine? Why is it always one way? Why should I put up with people touching parts of my body that I don't want touched, or making remarks that I find offensive, or expecting me to fulfil a role that I don't see as mine? If other women like it, that's up to them, but I don't.'**

**I realised that, apart from tiredness, one of my reasons for not being too keen to join the group in the evenings related to the attitudes Anita was describing.'**

## **End notes**

The final paragraphs of my account are based on notes I discovered in my journal, written some time after the workshop itself. The first was related, I think, to the Anita's comments about constant (and sometimes, seemingly, one-sided) efforts at respect on our part as westerners.

'Thinking of one participant's remark that my presentation had been 'a bit dry', and of Sasha's question whether my model was descriptive or prescriptive, and my reply, 'a mixture' (and subsequent thinking), I wonder if generally I'm trying to be too 'pure' - keep myself and my passions, hopes, beliefs, out too much - which in the end I can't: they'll be there whether acknowledged or not. Who/how am I respecting when I try not to impose? Is it as much about not exposing myself?' A big question in relation to Harare too, and the whole question of nonviolence.'

The other journal note I found was about 'contextualisation' - another Harare theme. I observed that although the word is normally used to mean localising, it should also mean universalising - locating things in the wider context of human experience. The note continued with a surprising nugget of information from a colleague in the London organisation to which I had been responsible in this project, and with whom I subsequently discussed it. She told me that when their Secretary General (a Sri Lankan) spoke at a conference in Moscow about the organisation's work in Burundi,

conference participants were insulted because they 'felt they were being likened to a third world country'. My own final comment was:

'It amazes me that we ever manage to communicate anything across the veil of assumption and prejudice which obstructs, distorts and confuses. (Harare again.) And yet we do.'

That, then, was the final paragraph of this long account. Rereading it all, I have been struck by the signs of change taking place in the attitudes and behaviour of men from the former Soviet Union: the men in my 'facilitated self-reflection' group, encouraged by the women; those who resisted the role-play exercise changing their point of view in the process of participation, and Vasily changing his style of delivery and relaxing a little with the workshop process. Is this all to be seen as good: good adjustment and management of relationships, helpful new understandings? Or was it another example of one way influence, the triumph of the dominant culture? Maybe it was both.

#### **Closing thoughts at the end of a chapter, and of the 'accounts' section of my thesis**

In my next chapter, in my discussion of the issues that have recurred in my work, I will compare my different experiences of acceptance and resistance to my presence in a group as a facilitator from Western Europe. Clearly the workshops described and discussed in this chapter gave me much food for thought. Our team relations in the second two demonstrated to me what I knew already: that there are limits to my own respectfulness.

In my search for a way of being, as a woman, in my work, and a way of speaking for that, I believe I have detected some progress. But I have been confronted by my continuing ambivalence about being myself and containing myself in terms of my values and beliefs (a question that was first raised for me at the end of my very first research workshop, in Rostov). *Should* I express who I am more? Am I ever prescriptive? Do I sometimes want to be? Can I - and how can I - deal more helpfully or powerfully (see Boulding 1978) with the question of violence and nonviolence, bearing in mind my own identity as a citizen of a country which has built and maintains its position of

power in the world through the threat and use of violence on a massive scale? Do I want to hold on to the moral commitment (and political positioning) implied by words like 'oppression'?

In spite of my unclarity on these questions, I have seen that my theory on stages and roles in conflict, although it may carry within it my own confusion about describing and prescribing, can nonetheless be useful in opening up new avenues of understanding and debate.

And what of my need to act responsibly in circumstances not of my choosing? As I reach the end of this 'accounts' section of my thesis, I conclude that I will never work in perfect circumstances, even when I have had an opportunity to help shape them. Nor will I deal with them perfectly once I am in them. However, if I think about the workshops described in this chapter and stand back from them a little, I can see what a wonderful opportunity they provided for their participants to meet and learn from each other. It would have taken much more difficulty and disharmony to destroy that benefit; and to cope with such things is part of going on learning to deal with the world as it is.

That 'standing back a little' is something which I have attempted to do regularly in this inquiry process. I have tried to look both inwards and outwards, and at times to put myself in the shoes of others, in as far as that is possible. I am both excited and depressed to discover that each time I have gone through the raw material of what I have written over these research years, I have had the feeling of understanding with more clarity and subtlety the meaning of it for me, and its possible use for others. That in itself seems positive. The depressing side of it is that it means I shall never have a real sense of completion. But if inquiry is a process, and I am a member of various communities of learning, that process does not end with this thesis, and is not confined to within me.

## CHAPTER NINE

### REFLECTIONS ON RESPECT

In this penultimate chapter I will draw together, under different headings, the issues which have emerged from my working, thinking and writing as constituting important aspects of what respect means, and what it means to practice it.

Throughout my inquiry and throughout my thesis, I have tried to keep my four threads running: respect as a concept, and the meanings it has in different cultures; respect in my practice as a facilitator; the development and testing of useful theory, and the development of the art of being a 'reflective practitioner' (Schon 1983). I have often come close to being overwhelmed by the complexity of the ramifications of this quadruple focus. It seemed vital to the integrity of my research not to try to reduce that complexity; but equally vital to give it some shape and order, to render my findings graspable. I therefore propose now to collect and reflect on the main issues which emerged and which will already, I hope, have become visible through my accounts and commentary. At points I will expand on these by drawing in new material, from work undertaken more recently than that covered in my accounts.

This chapter will be a rather strange, lumpy beast. The length of different parts of it will vary greatly, since I have expanded at some length on one or two issues which seemed still to require more substantial development. Other questions may be dealt with relatively briefly, because they received more attention in preceding chapters, or because I mean to return to them in my conclusions. The new material which I introduce may feel out of place, in terms of form, but I bring it in nonetheless, on account of its importance to the understanding I have reached on certain issues. Despite its deformities, this chapter has, I think, an important function to fulfil in collecting and setting out the different 'pieces' of my learning and questioning, while still relating them explicitly and systematically to the experiences from which they came - in a way that my more free-flowing and general conclusions will not.



I arrived at the different headings and subheadings for my reflections by combing through my accounts and using 'postits' to develop the equivalent of a card index system. I did this in order not to miss anything that seemed important and to relate to each other comparable (often contrasting) experiences and reflections from different workshops. I then tried to group the different headings that were emerging in relation to three of the main thematic threads of my inquiry. The fourth thread, that of the inquiry process itself, and my own development as researcher/ practitioner, will run through the other three; and I will return to it in a more consolidated way in my conclusions.

I will, however, comment here on the way in which the structuring and writing of my thesis has in itself helped me to understand what I have discovered. In attempting to collect and group the different themes and subthemes which had emerged from my working, thinking and writing, I found (as I then noted at the beginning of Chapter One) that what I had seen as my lead research focus - that is, learning about the cultural meaning of respect in different parts of the world - was a relatively small part of what had actually emerged through my research process. What constitutes a much greater learning is about the challenges of establishing, as facilitator, respectful relationships within workshops, given different roles and cultures, and perceptions of power.

Questions about facilitation are inextricably connected to fundamental questions about pedagogy: how it is best practised and what it can most helpfully include; and to what degree the answers to these questions are culturally formed. Within the context of these wider questions I learned a great deal about my own strengths and weaknesses, and about the few matters of respect which, though culturally weighted, are vital to me and my own being, and which can be a matter of conflict within a workshop probably almost anywhere.

The theoretical aspect of my research was the easiest to track, and does not take up nearly so much space as the complex of issues related to facilitation. It has, however, assumed an importance for me, and a solidity in my practice, which I did not expect; which has taught me that theory matters to me and can be of real utility to others.

Having considered several possible groupings and orderings of topics, I will begin my 'issues review' with the question of respect - its meaning and cultural implications - moving on to the things I learned about cross-cultural respect as affected by power relations, past and present, including the power of language. I will then look at power relations in relation to gender. This review of power dynamics and conflicting points of view will take me into the question of experiential learning as an issue in itself, and the respect-related cultural challenges for facilitators and participants which are inherent in the workshop culture. From there I will move into the area of respect in the practice and role of the facilitator, reflecting on my own experience as I have tried to model it; questions of power and responsibility in the management of the workshop process, and of elicitive, didactic and challenging roles.

The next cluster of issues will be related to underlying beliefs and values: their importance and the ways they can be handled in workshops. Then I shall look at the content of my workshops, my theoretical contribution and the way I approach theory, and the question of contextualisation. Finally I shall step outside the workshop process to consider questions of evaluation, workshop organisation and context, and my own self-respect, with the related issues of money and self-care. I will close the chapter with some remarks about the overall process of allowing and encouraging the emergence and proliferation of these questions, and trying to find my way through them.

## RESPECT: MEANING AND CULTURE

Both explicitly and implicitly, I have used respect as a constant reference point in workshop deliberations and processes: most systematically and explicitly in my explanations of nonviolence as a philosophy and in my use of the 'iceberg' model for problem -solving in conflict; more generally and implicitly through an emphasis on listening and assertiveness in communication, through the idea of inclusiveness in constructive approaches to conflict, through the introduction of a focus on human needs as the basis for workable and durable solutions, and through the empathic process of 'needs and fears mapping', which encourages an imaginative understanding of universally recognisable wants and emotions. Through this form of thinking, needs emerge as the focus of both

rights and responsibilities. Honour and dignity, as well as more practical needs, have emerged as matters needing to be encompassed by a rounded understanding of respect. Closely related to the notion of justice, they can be vital motivators for conflict, as well as key elements in its resolution.

My account of the trainers' gathering held at Neve Shalom/ Wahat al Salam, in Israel/ Palestine, is the one that gives the fullest sense, from a variety of cultural perspectives, of different ways in which respect is understood and what it is seen to require. In that workshop it was the value most frequently mentioned, often in the company of 'justice'. Although most participants expressed a strong sense of community in different forms, and social responsibility, this did not seem to conflict with a strong valuing of individuals and what they need and are owed by society. Respect was understood in terms of meeting basic needs, safeguarding rights of freedom to act and speak, upholding individual dignity, and nurturing self-respect - often in the face of oppressive structures and customs. These views seemed to be shared, in this group, across continents. I suppose that between us we represented, broadly, the counter-culture of nonviolence.

The notion of respect seemed closely related to notions of identity and belonging, in relation to collectivities as well as to single human beings. For participants from Latin America, there was a sense not only of the dignity and rights of individual persons, but of 'the people'. From an African perspective, honour resided in the family, clan or tribe. The Europeans talked in terms of 'civil society'. What was not discussed in that workshop was the concept of nationhood, which along with ethnicity, has been a central issue in many of my workshops in the post-communist world; one I have never challenged as such, but have brought into the arena of critical awareness. I have formed the impression, from my experience and anecdotal knowledge, that giving pride of place to ethnic identity and aspirations to nationhood is not an outcome of culture, but of historical legacies and political upheaval, in which culture becomes a flag to wave and a warm coat to put on. I will return later to the question of history and its after-effects.

In spite of these different understandings of collectivity, and therefore of identity, I have found that the frameworks and processes I have used in my workshops, on the basis of the twin notions of mutuality and respect, have provided a means for participants from every continent to see their own

reality in new ways, to their apparent satisfaction, and to approach conflict-related questions through a common frame.

The cultural difference which seems the most fundamental in dealing with conflict (and in workshops about it) is that related to open expression and silence, which in turn is related to the relative valuing of individual rights and freedoms on the one hand and social harmony on the other. The participants in Israel who identified a tendency to silence and favouring of harmony within their own culture - those from India, Sri Lanka and Nepal - were clear that they wished to counter some of the effects of such socially imposed harmony, which they saw as oppressive. However, it seems clear that social norms in relation to what is considered fitting in interpersonal behaviour (other than the most private) may be at variance not only with the approaches of ANV and CR, but with the ethos of the training workshops designed to promote these approaches, as I will discuss later.

This brief review of respect-related issues does not touch the issue of gender, which is included in the next section. The extreme brevity of what I have written above reflects my experience that the kinds of cultural difference alluded to in Chapter Two, which could be expected to make cross-cultural work problematic, have not proved to be so, as far as I can tell, in the workshops I have experienced in the time of my research, and have not made themselves felt strongly or yielded much interesting material for me to produce here. On the other hand, the issues grouped below, as different manifestation of power relations, have seemed of great importance.

## **RESPECT AND POWER RELATIONS**

### **North and South, East and West**

Oppressive power relations make genuine respect difficult, if not impossible. In several workshops I have experienced the living effects of colonialism on relationships between facilitators and participants. Maybe I should have written 'the living effects of colonialism past and present', recognising that the current 'globalisation' of economic structures, culture and power is having a

destructive effect on those who were formerly colonised, and that my presence with some groups in the role of 'trainer' can be seen as an act of neo-colonialism.

In my training workshops in former Yugoslavia and with women from the region at Blalaton, when we have focused on their actual situation and conflict, I believe I have been felt to be simply an enabler, a support, for their own struggle to make meaning of their circumstances and find ways of acting to some purpose. My Britishness has, I think and hope, been relatively unimportant, whereas my being an outsider has been useful.

Similarly, in my workshops in the North Caucasus, the proximity of several live conflicts has meant that the focus was not so much on who these outside 'trainers' were as on the conflicts themselves, and the application of new approaches to them. In Beirut, however, I did notice, at the beginning of the workshop, some suspicion or resistance to us three Western trainers. Maybe the diffuseness and multiplicity of low-level conflicts within the country, and the overwhelming sense of the bigger regional powers leaning on it and controlling it, made hostility to outsiders more likely. Probably these feelings reflected greater underlying hostility towards the West.

At the Rostov workshop Clem and I felt no resistance towards us personally, though some initial mistrust about our methods. In my Warsaw account I quoted and reflected on Anita's observations about the East-West dynamic in relation to my presentation. In these more general workshops, I think I did sense a degree of resistance to Western input from the former Soviet participants - which may have been prompted a little by the presence and manner of Vasily in the facilitation team, and some resulting sense of competition. (It may also have had to do with my being a woman.) But an intense mix of embracing and repulsing Western ways and values is currently at work in the post-Soviet world, and it would be surprising if this did not make itself felt in these workshops, when attention is not drawn to any single, pressing conflict. National pride and a sense of current political and economic inferiority make for resentment. Russians do not want to be treated like a 'third-world' country, which helps me understand the anger and resentment of people living in parts of the world so designated.

The 'East Europeans' I have worked with, both in Moscow and Warsaw and elsewhere, seemed more at ease with themselves and with West European trainers. Many have had similar approaches and skills, and those who did not were eager to learn. It is only with participants from post-communist European countries - former Yugoslavia, Romania, Hungary, Poland - that I have felt no glimmer of resistance or resentment; and maybe I have missed something there, since in recent encounters I have found some impatience that the expertise available in those countries is often bypassed. Maybe for them to become fully reintegrated into the rest of Europe is too deep a need for resistance.

At the gathering in Schlaining of trainers from former Yugoslavia, the effects were felt as a kind of dependency: the women looking up to trainers from the West, in spite of the extent of their own experience. Forging a real partnership was hard work, but in the end possible - as it has been in the region itself. I have recently co-facilitated workshops in Croatia with local trainers, working in a relationship where our different kinds of expertise - local knowledge and experience on the one hand and wider perspectives and experience on the other - have felt equal and complementary. More recently, and perhaps still more importantly, I have been invited by colleagues from Belgrade to co-facilitate with them a workshop they want to offer in London, because they have some expertise they would like to offer to practitioners here. I deduce, from this, that little by little they have been able to integrate what they have gained from outside with their own outstanding expertise; so that it has been of use to them without, in the long term, proving an obstacle.

At our training gathering in Israel, the division that emerged in our group dynamic was between the North and West on the one hand and the South and East on the other. (As I observed in my account, some other cracks might have appeared, given time, since those enormously broad designations mask worlds of difference.) In this case there was an open processing of the feelings that were present, which felt quite positive: 'grown-up', honest - respectful; very unlike the mix of servility and resentment (both towards me and towards South Africans) I seemed to detect in my conversations with the Zambian in the first Geneva workshop. This seemed to represent a kind of victimhood which is extremely disempowering and was very unlike the undercurrent of hostility present in the Harare workshop. I think it must have helped in Israel that we were all trainer-

participants, with shared responsibility for the workshop. Such resentment as there was related to the initial power of the organising group, which was North American and European in composition.

In Beirut, with a single national group, there was some mutual suspicion among participants to begin with, but I suspect that it was eased to some degree by the unifying suspicion towards the European and North American facilitation team, who I believe were regarded, by some at least, and to some degree, as neo-colonialists.

In Harare it was clear that some participants saw old colonial relationships being played out in our workshop arrangements. I also sensed that their display of indignation constituted some kind of power play - not only between those participants and the organisation's staff and me, but between participants themselves. Here the claim to victimhood seemed quite the opposite of servile. I think it probably made collective, political sense and constituted part of the process of taking power. But it seemed to me that it was also somehow degrading, for us all, in that it involved a disregard for the feelings, care and hard work of those most under attack, and to disregard participants' own responsibility for advance agreements and the management of the workshop in unavoidable circumstances.

It does seem likely that when a group is very mixed (in terms of where people come from), and everyone is coping with cultural differences in all directions, as we all were in the Geneva workshops, the cultural difference between participants and facilitators will stand out less. I am also pretty sure that training trainers means trouble(!) and that some of the turbulence we experienced in Geneva, as well as Harare, came from the muscle-flexing of trainers out of role. In Harare the potential conflict between French and English speaking participants did not materialise, I think, because there was a more important conflict between participants and 'the team', who were the overall outsiders.

The workshops I have facilitated during the time of my research have varied in so many ways that it is difficult to detect with any confidence a clear pattern of what 'works' and what proves difficult in

terms of perceptions and power relations between participants and facilitators. I am fairly convinced that there need not be any insurmountable problems between facilitators themselves, regardless of where they come from, if they personally respect themselves and each other. My working with George was a delight for us both; Cleo and I would have made a good team; I have enjoyed comfortable and equal co-facilitation with colleagues from Ireland, Croatia, Poland, Germany and the US. What is very clear, however, is that coming from Western Europe I need to be very sensitive to how *participants* (rather than co-facilitators) feel about the power I hold as Western facilitator. On the other hand, as far as I can tell, the dynamics of these relationships have never rendered workshops less than useful to participants. In that sense, maybe it all 'works'.

Maybe what is really at issue for me is my own comfort and discomfort. I want to be liked, wanted and affirmed, and find it hard to be on the receiving end of resentment or even ambivalence. As I concluded after the Israel workshop, cross-cultural training in new approaches to conflict is bound to involve conflict itself. If I believe, as I do, that conflict is a normal and potentially productive part of life, that must apply to the life of workshops. As a facilitator of learning about conflict, I need to accept conflict - including cultural - that arises in workshops; but I need to be aware of the impact of perceived and active power relations and take care not to abuse the 'trainer' position. I also wish not to be part of perpetuating disempowering patterns of relationship. I realise now, as I near the end of my research process, including the writing, that what I have experienced is that power relations matter more than cultural differences.

I think the process of inquiring into these questions has given me the incentive to recognise and acknowledge the feelings they trigger in me, and at the same time to look at those feelings and the questions themselves more dispassionately. The Israel gathering represented a turning point in my struggle to find some personal balance in these tides of conflicting and powerful energies. Often I felt caught between other people's feelings of victimhood and anger, and my own struggle to deal with blame and guilt and to affirm myself *as myself* - 'But I *am* English'. I reached a point where I felt I could embrace my own uncertainties as a gift - a safeguard against arrogance and insensitivity. This step towards self-acceptance stood me in good stead for survival in Harare. But my experiences there certainly confirmed me in my original conviction that it makes no sense, from



anyone's point of view, to import a white Western team into Africa, or anywhere else in the South or East, unless there are very strong overriding needs or constraints - in other words, if there seems a clear need for such a workshop, and no local trainers are able and available to do it. Every effort needs to be made to encourage the activities of local trainers. Ironically, of course, that was the purpose of the Harare workshop: one which it seems to have fulfilled (see later).

## **Language and power**

In Israel and in the first Geneva workshop, hierarchical power relations were seen, by the Latin Americans, to be at work in the use of English (and, in Geneva, French) as the language for the workshops. In Geneva particularly, the small Latin American group felt isolated and marginalised. The journal extracts from my later work at the Graduate School in Geneva, which are quoted in Chapter Six, describe in some detail the way in which the language question was played out as minority rights issue, and record my conclusion that although the notion of rights may be useful, those 'rights' are necessarily relative. Managing language relations is both a practical and a symbolic matter - as, I imagine, are all questions of minority rights. I concluded that

'in practice the balance between various needs and rights is found by the active, sensible and compassionate exercise of responsibility by everybody.'

My experience in the Geneva Graduate School would seem to suggest that when those affected have the feeling that their needs are being treated seriously, and that the linguistically powerful are ready to try to address the power imbalance, they are ready to work with the inevitable remaining difficulties. However, the comparable experience in Harare and the first Geneva workshop was that convincing people that their needs have been adequately respected is no easy matter, and that the issue of language can become a symbolic bone of contention, a vehicle for the expression of a more general sense of alienation and resentment.

The extracts quoted from my journal of the Geneva Graduate School reveal my own ambivalence to the power my command of English gives me. Like other forms of power, I both enjoy it and feel uncomfortable about it. I have concluded that in international groups I can put at the group's service my ability to be articulate in the most readily and widely understood language; but that I need to be as aware as possible of the power that gives to me and fellow English speakers, and to make considerable efforts to use rather than abuse that power, and safeguard as far as possible the rights and needs of others. That will entail being as precise and at the same time as simple as possible in the way that I use language, and saying the same thing in several different ways when it is of particular importance. In addition, it can help everyone if overt reference is made to power, respect and language use, with an explanation of how decisions were made and how the agreed process is to be used to the maximum empowerment of all.

In groups where I am the only person needing to use English, the problem feels very different - though, strangely, not necessarily more uncomfortable. My clearest and most frequent experience of being in this position has been working with groups from former Yugoslavia, who have chosen for specific reasons to call in an outside facilitator or trainer, knowing that this will involve the use of interpreters/ translators. In this case I have often felt, at times, disempowered - being one step behind what was going on - and a nuisance; which is a useful experience; and I have not felt like someone with too much power.

I also felt a nuisance in the North Caucasus, and more recently at a workshop in Abkhazia, because everyone else could communicate in Russian, which was the language into which my English was being interpreted, but not the first language of most of the participants. This gives another twist to the language question: two colonial languages as it were diluting each other's impact. Russian, the language of the colonisers, is the lingua franca of the Caucasus region, in the same way that English and French both unite and divide Africa linguistically and culturally. Although in Harare the immediate experience of post-colonial feelings within the group brought French and English speaking Africans together, my ability to work to a degree in both languages was both practically useful and symbolically important - both for the French-speaking participants and the whole group,

in that I was seen to be making an effort to do what was less easy for me: giving up some of my own power.

As a Sierra Leonian participant at the Geneva Graduate School commented, we cannot be held responsible for what our forebears did, but we are responsible for being sensitive to its effects. Linguistic globalisation is one such effect.

### **Power, hierarchy and gender**

I am not aware of the existence of any nonhierarchical culture, but it would seem that traditional cultures are more hierarchical than relatively 'modern' ones, and that in both cases less hierarchical counter-cultures can be created. I recognise that such creations are part of my personal agenda, within a long-term goal of overall cultural transformation. I write this particularly as a feminist, but also as an 'egalitarianist' more generally. It will have emerged from my accounts that I was often aware that the egalitarian, facilitative approach I and colleagues were inviting participants to consider ran counter to their cultural norms as well as our own; counter also to what actually goes on, most of the time, in the world of realpolitik. I will return to the question of realism when I consider the usefulness of the ideas I promote and encourage in my workshops. In the meantime I live with the memory of our workshop at Rostov, and the 'mediation' role-play, at the end, in which the mediator commanded his clients to do as he said. I also remember the constant insistence of would-be mediators in Moscow that they needed more prestige in order to do their work. Maybe they are right. Maybe it makes more sense to work with the culture you have than the culture you might have. And yet I am left with the conviction that it is the culture we all, to varying degrees, share that is at the heart of the many and bloody conflicts we are desperately trying to address. I will not relinquish my transformation agenda.

On the whole, within our workshops, participants were able to leave status behind. The exception to this was gender. Male domination and, in the Former Soviet Union, female subservience, seemed so entrenched that sometimes it seemed that only I was aware of and distressed by them. In Rostov

I felt unable to make any kind of challenge, seeing myself as isolated in my concern, from the women participants, and from my male colleagues. In Warsaw I found the confidence and clarity to speak with my own voice and from my own feelings and observations, and succeeded in at least raising a question and creating a space for some small response from other women.

In the Geneva workshops, when women raised their own issues, I simply facilitated the discussion they provoked. However, in the first workshop I was seen, by one participant at least, as taking sides with the women who wanted to have a women's group. Did I take sides? I am not sure. But I am sure that who I am will be manifest in my facilitation, whether I like it or not, and I need to be as aware as possible of that, and take responsibility for it. So far I have always had a male co-facilitator when working with mixed groups, so I suppose my femaleness is unlikely to be allowed to turn into tyranny. Rather I feel I do not speak loudly enough for my gender; but then a facilitator's job is not one of advocacy: or is it? I will return to this question in my conclusions.

In my workshops in and for the former Yugoslavia, I have worked almost entirely with women, and women's power and responsibility have not been at issue. At the Schlaining gathering it became apparent that women's role and possibilities in society, both generally and during the war, encouraged many of them to ignore, to a large extent, political questions, and to confine their attention to personal and community issues. Through our training agenda at Balaton, however, an all female group of participants engaged whole-heartedly with the political problems which they themselves raised, and saw new potential for themselves as people who could act to change things at that level.

The women trainers who met in Harare had, for the most part, a strong feminist perspective, and some of them were dissatisfied with me for not stipulating that we should focus all our thinking about conflict on the experience of women. I argued then, and do not disagree with myself now, that since an exclusive focus on women's issues was not in the description of the workshop to which they had been invited, it was for them to choose their own focus in their groupwork as we went along. In the event, many but not all of the situations they chose to work on involved women's experiences and rights specifically.

Holding together my own feelings and viewpoint as a woman with my role as a facilitator, and with the need to respect other cultures, remains, I think, my hardest challenge. One of the things that makes it so difficult is that I cannot separate my being as a woman, and my feminism, from my being as a member of a dominant culture, coming from a country with a colonial history which has a living legacy in terms of power relations. Feminism is often represented as part of 'modernisation' - which means that the lead is seen as coming from the North and West. On the other hand, my experience tells me that women elsewhere are vocal and active on their own behalf, and do not want their oppression justified in the name of tradition.

When I say 'women elsewhere' I mean many of the women I have met. My action inquiry has not given me a broad enough sample to risk any generalisations. And I should note that most of the women I have met from the Former Soviet Union seem not too inclined to challenge their position in society. That position also defines their current possibilities for contributing to peace. Women would not be seen as acceptable mediators at the political level. In the countries that used to form Yugoslavia, most women play little part in power politics, although there are exceptions. But so it is also here in the UK, and I want to see things change - as many women in the Balkans and in central and eastern Europe want to see them change. Very recently I met up with women colleagues from Belgrade, who are beginning to work with politicians in their training programmes; which is one way in.

The practitioner field in which I work mirrors, at the international, political level (as opposed to the domestic, social level of neighbourhood mediation, for instance) the norms of the societies in which academics and practitioners live and work: that is, it is predominantly male. I notice that whereas having two male facilitators is not unusual, I have never been asked to work with another woman, except in women-only workshops. Without any substantial evidence, I conjecture that being one among few women I may have some advantage in being sought after to work with a man in gender-conscious projects. At the same time, I notice I have only very recently been asked for the first time to co-facilitate a problem-solving (as against a training) workshop, and I suspect that the male organisers of these events feel that it takes a man to be convincingly authoritative in such circumstances - or, at least, accepted as being so.

What is to be done? I see the urgency of acting within current realities to end bloodshed and restore some semblance of peace. But in matters of gender, as in other matters, there needs to be a balance between peace and justice. If the CR movement is trying to promote inclusiveness, it could act with more conviction in modelling the values it espouses. At the same time, as I write, I can hear an inner voice timidly advising against trying to rush people; advocating respect for their need to change gradually, not to be rushed ..... And so the my internal debate goes on. Billig (1987) argues that thought is by nature argumentative or dialogical, but I would like this particular inner dialogue to lead me to a clearer place.

### **Experiential learning**

Much of what I have written above, about power and conflict as experienced in workshops, could have been written under this title. What I want to do in this section of my chapter is to pause and consider the possibilities and difficulties for learning about conflict through the workshop experience. I have alluded to these questions in my 'accounts' chapters, but have nowhere, so far, reflected on them in any depth.

In a multi-cultural workshop, the experience of the differences in operation within that context is the workshop's greatest opportunity for bringing culture and cultural difference into awareness. In any workshop, engaging with the immediate realities of group dynamics, including conflict, gives a special opportunity for learning from experience which is common to the whole group and at the same time will be different for each participant. Such learning, when it is achieved, is very powerful, because it engages participants at every level: affective as well as cognitive. Moreover, the experience of difference and contradiction in workshops gives participants an opportunity to test the possibilities for living and working with them, and discovering the commonalties which seem to bring and hold groups together in spite of conflict. Working with George in that first Geneva workshop, I experienced in a very particular and personal way that it is possible to join forces, conceptually, emotionally and practically, with someone whose life background, culture and viewpoint are in many ways worlds apart from one's own. And within that group, participants

experienced both the challenge and the possibility of forging a sense of community among individuals and groupings of very diverse and sometimes conflicting perspectives, needs and opinions. This was something not easily achieved, and would have not have been easy to maintain; but I have experienced often enough in workshops this discovery of fundamental human bonds - whether across cultures or across conflicts - to believe that they exist (or can be constructed), and that respect is both a route to and a product of their discovery. Even in Harare, in spite of the tensions between organisers and participants, between Europeans and Africans, those tensions were made bearable by moments of empathy and outreach; and we did in practice work effectively, if not comfortably, together, and all valued what had been achieved.

I recognise my own tendency to look for the positive, and to want to see people and ideas coming together. The rosiness of the conclusions of some of my accounts makes me a little uncomfortable - as, for instance, in the case of what I wrote about the Beirut workshop. I notice, however, that I am not alone in these feelings and observations, or in the importance I attach to them. The experience of community building was clearly the most important aspect of that first Geneva workshop; the experience of having (as I put it in my account) 'become a family together'; of having 'been able to be a model of co-existence', while recognising our differences; the feeling that 'respect had prevailed'; that we had been confirmed in our commitment to the promotion of a 'culture of life'. This last phrase, used by the Latin American group, suggests the idea of a supra-cultural culture: a culture of embrace. I was going to say a culture of tolerance; but tolerance is too grudging a word. The respect which was seen to have prevailed in this workshop was something much warmer. It was affirming, celebratory; and at the same time it allowed for sharp disagreement, for conflict. So I conclude not that respect (which opens the way to empathy) resolves conflict, but that it can make it a positive rather than (or as well as) a negative experience. The resolution of the conflict between the two women at Balaton was the experience which gave to the workshop as a whole much of its power. Learning to trust participatory learning processes in workshops is, for many workshop participants, a way of learning to trust such processes as a way of dealing with conflict.

I have also learned experientially, however, that experiential learning is not always easy to manage or achieve - particularly experiential learning from what is unpleasant and unresolved. Whereas the

conflicts which erupted in Geneva and at Balaton reached a point where they had been dealt with in a way that satisfied those groups, in Harare, I felt unable (for reasons I discussed in my account) to surface the rumbling, underlying conflict, and it remained unresolved and - at the time at least - unlearned from. At more recent workshops I have experienced other apparent failures with experiential learning.

In the support project workshops facilitated by Friedrich, Vasily and me, poor communication, group skills and habits often got in the way of mutual learning. After our second workshop in Warsaw, having some funds left over, we decided to offer a training workshop for those who had expressed a need for training as such, hoping that way to have the opportunity to help less skilled group members of the group to catch up with the others. This training workshop, which was to concentrate on group and communication skills, with some additional work on problem-solving negotiation and mediation, took place in Minsk in August 1996. Friedrich was not free, so my old colleague Jo was my co-facilitator. Since group needs and dynamics were high on our agenda, Jo and I, on the second day, decided to focus on the uneasy dynamic within our own group, asking what we could have done better on the first day to create an atmosphere of ease and trust. We were unable, however, to convey the meaning of our question to most of the group, who seemed to feel accused of some lack, rather than invited to make a critique of Jo's and my facilitation and to reflect on their own behaviour. Eventually Jo and I abandoned our questions and instead set up a series of role-plays, which seemed much more successful as learning mechanisms - probably because they did not seem so threatening.

I had a similar experience not long after, with another old colleague, Ruud, and another group, in Derry. On the last day of a week long workshop we asked our participants, students on an MA Peace Studies course, to discuss student representation in relation to their course directors, giving them some specific questions to consider. We proposed that when they had discussed the possibilities, and their preferences, in groups, each group should appoint two representatives to meet together, explain what their groups proposed and negotiate an agreement. The other group members would sit at a distance and watch.



Although the group work went well, the representatives' meeting was explosive. The first speaker proposed that the choice of student representatives should be based on gender and nationality, and this produced a very emotional reaction. The conflict quickly escalated, and the 'onlookers' were soon joining in. Accepting that the agreed process had collapsed, I stepped in and facilitated a general discussion about representatives and how to choose them. Since time was short, even that had to be cut off, with only the most rudimentary agreement that a representative or representatives would be chosen informally and ad hoc, as and when they were needed.

Since this was the last session of a week long workshop, the students had only their tea break in which to recover before our final evaluation. Most were too angry and upset to discuss what had happened, let alone stand back and learn from it. (One woman, however, said she had learned more from that last afternoon than from the rest of the week put together.) The mood of the group made evaluation of the week impossible. As one participant explained, he felt unable to separate his negative feelings in the present from his overall feelings and opinion of the week. Many others concurred with this. They felt miserable about the conflict which had taken place and one or two, if not all of them, clearly felt they had been 'set up' for it through the negotiation exercise. I think this sense of having been manipulated, while it imputed to Ruud and me intentions which we did not have, must have played quite a part in increasing their anger, since they had dealt in a much more relaxed way with a couple of angry incidents between participants earlier in the week.

I remember the much more serious, spontaneous conflict which took place between the Serbian and Hungarian participants at the Balaton, and the very constructive way in which it was handled in the group. The Hungarian said to me then, while she was still very distressed, that she was not ready for such a workshop and should not have come. I think she had, at that point, something of the same feeling of having been trapped in a situation which was too much for her to handle. The breakthrough came for her when she remembered the Christian convictions which had brought her there and she took to herself the responsibility to act to put things right. Once again perceptions about power seem to be central.

I also remember an incident in a local mediation training, in which a colleague ran an experiential exercise on mirroring body language, involving secret instructions to half the participants and resulting in a lot of anger. The exercise and the way in which it had been conducted provoked - justifiably in my view - the accusation of being manipulative. My feelings of extreme discomfort then, and subsequent reflections, prepared me for a conversation during my second workshop at Bossey, when one of the participants proposed that I should deliberately engineer conflict within the group, in order to provide experience for learning. My response then was to explain my objection in principle to manipulation, as a breach of trust between facilitator and participants; a denial of the values on which the workshop was based. I recall that the Minsk participants felt that they were being needlessly put through things by Jo and me; and I feel I have to conclude for the moment that whereas groups may be willing to deal with conflict as it arises, any perceived facilitator role in engineering it or dwelling on it causes anger and disaffection against the facilitator(s), diverting attention from the implications of participants' own feelings and behaviour - and indeed making it very difficult for them to explore them.

If, as Jo and I eventually did in Minsk, Ruud and I had used a negotiation role-play, rather than setting up an actual negotiation, I believe participants would have learned something and the workshop would have ended on a happier note. The more they had entered into the role-play, the more thorough would have been the processing of emotions required afterwards, but also the more profound the learning. No role-play generates the intensity of emotional engagement that 'real life' does. That is the limitation and at the same time the benefit of role-play.

Had we been able to spend more time with our Derry students, we would probably have been able to pursue and resolve the conflict which had erupted, and then to have reflected on the whole process. Or if we had been able to meet with them a week or two later, it might have been possible to reflect on the conflict despite the fact that they had not resolved it.

I think it was possible to learn from the conflict and its handling in the Budapest workshop, because it had been successfully dealt with and the remaining emotions were positive. Even so, it would have felt insensitive to dwell right then on what had been so painful. By the same token, the conflict

between organisers and participants in Harare was not able to be reflected on because it remained unresolved; so that although feelings were eased at various points by being voiced - and this was noted - the struggle for moral advantage continued and the feelings it generated could not be transcended and analysed at that time.

My provisional conclusions about what is and is not possible in terms of conflict and experiential learning are, firstly, that the distress involved must be able to be given some distance: a condition which can be met by, for instance, the use of role-play, by the fact that the conflict has been resolved and is no longer provoking negative emotions, or by the elapse of sufficient time so that the passions of unresolved conflict have abated. Secondly, that participants must not have felt manipulated or 'set up' by their facilitators. These considerations are consonant with the notion of respect: respect for feelings, and respect for autonomy and therefore participants' right to openness - honesty - on the part of the facilitator. All the above considerations, I notice, unsurprisingly apply not only to experiential learning through conflict in workshops, but to conflict more generally.

Although after our Derry experience I felt dispirited about the possibility of enabling participants to learn reflexivity even in the heat of conflict (a capacity which I have a long way to go with myself), I remember now that the more experienced and skilled of our participants in Minsk were clear that they had learned a great deal from our process there (see letter quoted later). Skills take time to develop, but small lights may be switched on, and existing lights may be given a boost. It may also be that learning by doing can be digested unconsciously, in the course of time and in the light of later experience. As it emerged, the written evaluation of the Derry workshop, organised by the MA teaching staff, was very positive; and I see I noted in my Minsk journal that the group did become more reflective and, in case of some members, reflexive, as the week wore on. One participant wrote afterwards to say that although she had at first been critical of our use of our own group process for analysis, on reflection she considered it useful. She added,

'It was a great challenge to distance myself during the process, which may be one reason why there was some resistance among other members as well.'

I think that sums it up for me.

I think that when there is pre-existing conflict built into a group's very composition, (regardless of the process as such), as there was at Balaton for instance, experiential learning is almost bound to take place; and the more aware participants are from the outset of the likelihood of conflict, the more likely they are to learn from it. (The 'Irish question' was diluted in Derry by the presence of other nationalities, and in any case there was no contest, as there was only one very quiet Protestant in the group!) The first Geneva workshop started from the premise that we would be learning to 'live with our differences', and the way we managed it was the subject of constant reflection. The writer of the workshop report related the stages of our group's dynamics to the stages of the 'snake'. At Balaton, participants arrived with many misgivings, aware of the conflict that was represented in the group itself. In recent workshops in East Slavonia and in Romania, I have facilitated not only 'training', but the process of confronting prejudice and resentment. I shall return to this when I consider the question of facilitator responsibility.

### **Experiential learning through the workshop culture: respect or disrespect?**

The workshop ethos and style mirrors the kind of egalitarianism, open communication and participatory approach to conflict handling that it is inviting participants to consider for their life in the world outside. It encourages the free expression of feelings and views, including disagreements. For those whose cultures place high value on discretion and the maintenance of social forms, such workshops in themselves, like the attitudes and behaviours they promote, must seem strange, if not wrong-headed. The Japanese students in our Derry workshops explained to us that keeping conflicts covered was a value for their society which three out of the four of them supported. Yet they were active workshop participants, and readily discussed with us the differences which they identified between their culture's values and the ideas we were discussing. One of the students at the Graduate School in Geneva was from South Korea, and spoke about her own tendency to listen rather than to speak. She appeared to be quite at ease, though quiet, and when she did contribute verbally, did so perceptively and with apparent keen engagement. All these participants from the Far East were living, temporarily, in Europe, in culturally mixed groups, and so presumably were learning to relativise their own cultural norms. Since their participation in their courses was

voluntary, presumably this experience of difference was one which they had chosen, and they wanted to live, for a while, experimentally.

My commitment to workshop-style learning processes stems not only from my understanding of effective pedagogy, but from my values about people, and what I consider to be respectful relationships. The participatory, inclusive style of facilitated dialogue, in which there is 'parity of esteem' and the viewpoints and experiences of all are respected, is a model of CR practice. However, participatory and experiential approaches to learning (as to conflict handling) run counter to what is 'normal' in most, if not all, cultures, and participants can, to begin with, feel short-changed by it - not taken seriously; by implication, therefore, not respected. This has seemed a dilemma particularly with participants from the former Soviet Union, where lectures, experts and bibliographies are the usual manifestations of seriousness about learning. It has been my experience that while challenging these norms by offering something radically different may be, initially, uncomfortable, participants quite quickly begin to appreciate the benefits of this different approach, and get quite excited by it; and even those from cultures where open speaking is discouraged often enter eagerly into the process. Nonetheless, I want to remember how strange and undignified the workshop may feel at first, and to acknowledge its strangeness and explain its rationale. Having done that, I want to be sensitive to the reactions and responses of individual participants and of the group as a whole.

## POWER, RESPECT AND THE ROLE OF FACILITATOR

At the end of my Israel account I wrote,

**'For me, so far in my research, 'respect' holds good, both as a core theme and value for those wishing to approach conflict nonviolently, and as a focal point for cultural differences and dilemmas. It also seems the litmus test and only real safeguard for acceptable cross-cultural training.'**

I realise that the first thing I want to say about respect on the part of a facilitator is related to the valuing of individual participants. (I will discuss co-facilitation later.) Is this a result of coming from

an individualistic culture? Whether it is or not, I see it as crucial for myself in the role of facilitator to accept each participant and encourage her/ him to engage with the process in whatever way she/he finds comfortable, valuing her/ his contribution at the same time as being aware of the needs of the whole group - and expecting its members to do the same.

I feel from the feedback that I have received that I do manage, on the whole, to convey the respect I feel for participants and for their knowledge. It is embarrassing for me to quote this feedback, but since it constitutes an important part of the data of my research, I feel I must.

I recorded in my Balaton account how one participant asked me,

**'How did you do it? When you asked us a question, you wrote down all our answers. How could you know we'd get it right?'**

It was interesting that she expected me to see things in terms of 'right' and 'wrong'. I explained that I considered all participants ideas as valid per se, and that I would add my own comments as I felt appropriate.

At the end of my first week with the Graduate School in Geneva I wrote about the closing session in my journal:

'The course tutor who had accompanied our workshop said to me in her thanks at the end of that first week of their term that she was astonished and impressed by the way I took and valued, respected, every participant and his/her experience and ideas. She said she was too attached to her own ideas to do that, but that I was able to 'make place for others and for change'.

One of the participants spoke of the way we had offered them a process of sharing, in which we had all learned from each other, as well as for the particular knowledge and understanding which we had brought. Afterwards a visiting observer from a related religious community thanked me afterwards for the 'spirit' of my facilitation and my 'absolute respect for each participant'. It really seems as if I am succeeding in some measure to live my values.'

The above examples of feedback were spontaneous. At the Warsaw workshop, on the other hand, Anita and Sasha knew about my research and, as I described in my account, I had asked them for feedback on my respectfulness as a facilitator. As I recorded, Sasha was unequivocally positive;

Anita was generally so, but her feedback in one or two respects was more ambivalent. In her view I was 'almost excessively open to people's demands and recognising other people's wishes', and remarkably sensitive to what was going on in a group, and she described what she saw as my ability to name what was happening without giving offence: capacities which I recognise and value in myself. But she also noted that the exercise of this capacity had on one occasion at least come close to manipulation. This too I recognised and resolved to 'watch out for'. I have not 'caught myself at it' since - but maybe I have missed something!

At a more recent workshop I also asked for feedback on my respectfulness as a facilitator. This workshop also gave me some encouragement about experiential learning. The workshop had been prepared by Natasha, the staff member of a London based organisation. It was held, in January 1997, in Abkhazia: a small and beautiful territory which through bloody conflict seceded from Georgia in 1993. Although the Abkhaz were victors of the fighting, they were left with much trauma to deal with, their small country depopulated and in ruins, and at the time of our workshop they were internationally unrecognised and under economic blockade. The workshop, which had been planned with partners there, was intended to help participants to feel less isolated and powerless, giving them an opportunity to discuss their situation and to discover new ways of looking at it and find some possibilities for positive action. It was also seen as preparation for the several participants who would be going immediately afterwards to a problem-solving workshop, in which they would be grappling with some hard political and practical issues with Georgians counterparts. Our training workshop was held at a hotel (also used by the UN) at Pitsunda, a coach drive from Sukhumi, which provided a comfortable temporary environment for people making do in very difficult circumstances.

One of the particular interests of this workshop for me, from a facilitator's point of view, was the capacity of the group to be alive to our own process and to learn from it. In this case I invited them to use their base group evaluation and feedback sessions to reflect on what was going on between us - our own behaviours and dynamics - as well as on the workshop content. To my delight - after the rather recent experiences of Minsk and Derry - they responded with real engagement to this suggestion. As well as noting what they identified as positive and negative characteristics in their

own behaviour, they were extremely attentive to, and appreciative of, my way of facilitating, which they variously described as 'steady', 'firm', 'attentive', 'respectful', 'intelligent', 'charming', and 'tough'. They noted what they saw as my capacity to model the approaches we were exploring, creating a friendly atmosphere, and holding and managing tension and difficulty. This was particularly commented on after our most conflictual day, when discussion of the thorny topic of refugee return had been rendered even more difficult by tensions within the group and problems with interpretation. I was seen to have remained 'calm, respectful and patient - stoical'(!), and to have taken the opinions of each participant into account. It was said that my methods were 'very democratic'. (For workshop participants from former Soviet areas, this is perhaps particularly striking.)

It seems that what they were saying was that the characteristics that were important in my behaviour as a trainer, which were very much to do with giving - and therefore commanding - respect, were characteristics of the kind of behaviour needed by those who wish to handle conflict constructively. The list of characteristics they imputed to me corresponds very closely to the kind of list I would expect to generate under the heading of 'mediator skills'. They can be summarised as the ability to be strong and steady in holding a process, yet flexible and open in responding to the needs and ideas of those involved, creating a space in which they feel at ease and respected.

The notion of the importance of commanding respect was echoed by Natasha's comments to me. In her feedback to me at the end of the workshop, the first thing she said was that I 'commanded total respect' through my manner and presence. It surprised me that she should have thought I was primarily interested in participants' respect for me; but I remembered how some Russian participants in the support project workshops were very much concerned to gain respect, so that they could have recognition and authority in their work. I remember that my response then was to say that my chief concern in such circumstances would be to gain respect through such things as my integrity, understanding and discretion, rather than social status or position. I think the respect needed by a facilitator of workshops or a mediator in conflict, if they are to be able to do their work with authority, will depend on their demonstrating their fitness for their role; that is, on the respect they show, and their trustworthiness. I conclude that to fail in respect in such a role is to forfeit the



right to respect. So I want to be constant in it - which is not easy, but somehow the role makes it easier: puts me on my honour; makes my respectfulness a matter of self-respect. I think it is somehow a role I manage to live up to, most of the time if not always.

When I explained to Natasha that what I was really asking about was my respect for participants, she replied that I clearly was respectful: by the way I said appreciative things in response to each contribution - not 'general niceness'; by making sure that all who wanted to express something were heard; by responding to the group's realities and views, and their energy and needs in terms of timing and agenda. I had also, in Natasha's view, been culturally respectful 'to the extent of my knowledge'. This last limiting phrase was a reference to my failure to follow correct procedure when proposing a toast at our final dinner, changing focus without any lead from the 'tamodan' or toast master. In Natasha's opinion this mistake would have been taken in good part by participants because they would put it down to understandable ignorance rather than carelessness or cultural disregard. This would seem to support my hope - and tentative belief - that once trust has been established as to one's respect, ignorance will be seen simply as ignorance, and not as disrespect or insult or lack of caring.

Although the plenary evaluation at the end of the Abkhazia workshop was an open process, it was in practice very leader-focused. In the remarks I made in response, I commented on the quality of the group's participation and its importance. They really had engaged with the process with a will and at every level, including that of group process. I sometimes worry about my insistence in groups that participants listen to each other and not talk when someone else was talking. (This is always an agreed 'ground rule'. If no-one else suggests it, I do, and participants seem to concur readily enough.) However, as I wrote in my journal for this workshop,

'People really seem to understand the idea of listening to each other and remind each other about it. They also commented on the quality of their listening at the end of the day. Sometimes I think it's just my obsession. Natasha says that in (post-) Soviet society to talk to a neighbour in a session, while someone else is speaking, is quite normal and accepted. Does this mean that in those circumstances lack of respect is normal, or rather that this is not to be understood as lack of respect? '

I concluded that this group's keenness on the idea of listening suggested that whatever their previous norms, listening was important for them - and by implication potentially important for others from a similar cultural background.

## **Respect and care**

I want to add an important note naming care as an aspect of respect. The attention and regard I try to show to participants come not just from an idea - though the idea is there - but from a feeling, an impulse: a desire to cherish. Care is also expressed in more practical ways. At Balaton, for instance, as I recorded, participants greatly appreciated the provision of fruit in breaks. To them it was a sign of respect as expressed by attention to their needs, and I know that the Swedish women who were responsible for this thoughtfulness were determined to make the Balaton workshop a time of comfort for the women at all levels. (By comfort I mean cherishing and strengthening.) Similarly, in Abkhazia, Natasha had said to me beforehand that it would be good for participants just to have a week of comfort and fun together in a hotel, given the rigours they were enduring in their everyday life.

Physical arrangements are not my responsibility at these events, but I can ask questions and make suggestions about such things as venues and coffee breaks, which are important - as several of my accounts (particularly Harare) will have indicated. The beauty of our surroundings at Balaton, in Geneva and Abkhazia, though I may not (strangely) have mentioned it, must surely have contributed to the sense participants had of being cared about and cared for. And having good places to work in is important: enough space and light, reasonable acoustics, furniture which can be arranged conveniently. Even in Harare, where participants considered the accommodation inadequate, the pleasantness of the gardens helped them to relax and enjoy their work.

The aspect of care over which I and co-facilitators usually exercise most choice is the use of time for work and leisure. I find this very difficult. The main expression of care in a workshop is the workshop itself. It is meant to help those who participate. And yet those who come from far away

want to see something of the country they find themselves in. My Geneva account described our tussle over sight-seeing time, and the balance George and I tried to find between the wishes of some, the wishes of others, and our own sense of responsibility to the organisers and funders of the workshop. (No doubt also our sense of our own importance - or at least the importance of what we had come to do.) I still think we got it about right: that is, found a judicious balance; one which worked.

Balaton was another kind of case, in that participants, like those in Abkhazia, came from situations of great stress and hardship. My account records our discussions and my reflections at the time. Again, 'respect' was a matter of finding a satisfactory balance; and in the end the women found their work together the most refreshing part of the week: 'better than a holiday'. But I think this issue will continue to exercise me. Balancing is hard work, and I am aware of my own drivenness, my Calvinist-western work ethic, my European sense of time and my over-developed sense of duty (if I may make so bold as to judge myself); aware also of my anxiousness to put in a 'proper' day's work in exchange for my fee (which is ridiculous, since I usually end up putting in a highly improper working day of fifteen or sixteen working hours). I also have, in my 'task' orientation (Jelfs, 1982), a desire to fit in far more content, far more topics, than can usefully be covered in the time given, since I know that everything depends on everything else and want to give the whole picture. I find it hard to make separations and choose priorities. To be aware of this is not to have solved the problem. It is one I shall have to go on living with. However, I think I have reduced, if not cured, my tendency to overload agendas. When the group is a homogeneous one, with a known context and needs, that makes choice easier than when the world (including the world of conflict) is the 'focus'.

One final note on care. The use of games (which I explained in my Geneva account) has a role to play in helping participants to relax and enjoy being together; which in turn makes the work more pleasurable and productive. On the other hand I sense with some groups that games would feel too foolish, and try to meet the need for lightness and relaxation in other ways: short breaks, exercises which require moving around, preparing visual presentations and, with some groups, singing.

## **Facilitation, power and responsibility**

Respect cannot be separated from the responsible exercise of power, as was evident from the feedback of the Abkhaz participants discussed above, and from my reflections on decisions about time. As Lukes (1974) observes, power and responsibility go together. Facilitators, in order to provide the space for learning, have to exercise the power which is given to them by organisers and participants so that an agreed goal can be achieved. This is what Boulding (1978) calls 'integrative power'. It is part of the service facilitators offer. Power in facilitation was a major area of reflection during and after my first Geneva workshop, to which I referred above, as an example of the exercise of responsibility and power in relation to time. George and I felt it was our job to take into account the points of view of all the participants, and at the same time to respect the expectations of other 'stakeholders' and our own understanding of our task. We also saw it as part of our job to explain our thinking and the decision we had reached, as a matter of respect and answerability. In the same account I described the ways in which we attempted to share power and responsibility with the participants, particularly through the base groups, again making ourselves answerable in the way we presented to the whole group the feedback they had given and the decisions we had made in response, and why.

In many subsequent workshops I have found the use of base groups to be a very effective way of encouraging helpful feedback and drawing participants into both reflectiveness (and, in Abkhazia at least, reflexivity) and co-responsibility. The repeated cycles of action, reflection, report-back and adjustment, followed by new proposals and action, constitute a kind of team game with power, with the ball passed to and fro. What seems to emerge is a less conscious incorporation of power-sharing within the workshop process itself: a more equal relationship between trainers and participants. Towards the end of the first Geneva workshop I noted that, 'The group has little by little started almost running itself, power and responsibility having largely changed hands.'

One of the struggles that George and I had had at the beginning of the workshop was to enable participants to see that we could not provide some magic solution for answering their conflicting demands. Participants often follow the very human tendency to want everything and to deny that some choice has to be made. At the end of the Harare workshop I was confronted by contradictory demands as to the way our last sessions should be used: sessions which had to be curtailed because several participants had broken their agreement to stay till the end of the workshop. I had to argue with myself that I was not responsible for the dilemma or the fact that any choice I made would be to some degree unsatisfactory. I think now that I should perhaps have done the participants and myself the honour (respect) of naming clearly the non-sense, in practical terms, of their clamour of conflicting demands, leaving them to reach agreement on a joint proposal. Although I pointed out to them the impossibility of meeting all their requests, I still find such impossibilities hard to accept myself.

A more serious aspect of the question of responsibility was typified for me in one interchange at the second Geneva workshop. One of the week's case studies was of New Caledonia's attacks against the Solomon Islands. By the end of the exercise the participant whose case it was had decided that when he got home he needed to take strong action. One of the other members of his working group, a young woman from the USA, became very anxious, and was worried about her own responsibility, as one who had encouraged him, for the danger he might encounter. Michael and I had already been reflecting, as facilitators living in safe places, on this very question. Now I said to this young American what I had said to myself: that maybe the thing we had to do was to trust others to make their own choices, only reminding them, if we were part of their deliberation process, to weigh the likely costs involved and the risks they would be taking, and to make sure they were ready, both practically and psychologically. Still then, and as I write, I felt and feel uneasy. I suppose this is one more way in which we cannot escape our interdependence. Both our actions and inactions have their effect. How can we act responsibly? I feel that respect helps me here: respect for my own ability and responsibility, as I feel it, to contribute to processes of change; respect for the needs and realities of others, and respect for their own capacity and right to choose.

One particular form of challenge, in relation to this, is handling the kind of workshop to which I referred at the end of my discussion of experiential learning: workshops in which the group is composed of participants from different sides of a conflict, as was the case in recent workshops in East Slavonia and Romania. Those participants have already exercised their own responsibility in deciding to participate; but I have then had to decide with colleagues how hard to push them (and sometimes it is pushing) to surface their conflict by expressing some of their perceptions and feelings; or whether not to push at all. Participation in any exercise is voluntary, and at a recent workshop in Croatia, after careful consultation with my local co-facilitator, I proposed an exercise to which there was general resistance. I explained why I thought it was important and reminded the group of our agreed opt-out clause; then asked who wanted to go ahead. It was all but one, so we did it. The ensuing discussion became pretty heated and it was my job to facilitate its management; but this episode constituted a major breakthrough for the group, opening the way to real engagement and genuine understanding, rather than the artificial maintenance of superficial friendliness. I understand that for me respectful facilitation is designed to help enable the discovery of respect which is more than formal, through a process of open engagement.

I was going to write 'honest engagement', but realised that such valuing of 'honesty' was morally loaded and culturally based (though my experience supports it). And what if our judgement had proved wrong, and we had ended up with a complete and irreparable breakdown in the process, rather than a breakthrough? It is the responsibility, as I see it, of facilitators to make their best assessment of what they and the group can manage, so that the process does not end up doing more harm than good. This has never, I think, happened in one of my workshops, but it remains as a sobering possibility. Judgement and courage are needed here; and the judgement needs to include a sober assessment of the facilitator or facilitators' own nerve and capacity to contain and steer the process. At the same time it needs to take into account the courage needed on the part of participants, whose deepest feelings are involved, and who run the risk of having to live with unforeseen outcomes. They in turn must judge whether they can afford to trust their facilitators.

Not long ago, I was to facilitate a 'team building' workshop arranged to help a department in an organisation to process some internal conflict. Someone who knew my work, when he heard that I

was to be facilitator, said to one of the prospective participants, 'Oh, you'll be in safe hands with Diana.' I was both pleased and disturbed when this was reported to me: pleased because I want people to feel and be safe with me; disturbed because that may be to want something disempowering for others by allocating too much of responsibility to myself. I hope that what I do is to create enough safe space for participants to find the courage to take risks; but with a reasonable expectation that those risks will 'pay off'. In situations of interethnic conflict, getting that right seems crucial: the heaviest responsibility of all. In order to deal with that, I need to remember that it is my responsibility only to work to the best of my ability: to bring all my wisdom to bear, and to guard against interference from my own personal wants. Participants are also responsible adults and are free to make their own judgements and to act accordingly.

### **Co-facilitation**

To be sole facilitator of a workshop is to be the holder of a great deal of responsibility and power. I believe it is both symbolically and practically ill-advised. Such a monolithic form of power-holding encourages either too much looking up to the perceived leader (and I think this happened to a degree at Balaton and in Abkhazia), or, as in Harare, a desire to trim the power holder's sails, (though my Europeanness was a major factor in that case.) At the same time too much power means too much responsibility, and I believe that solo facilitation, particularly in long and difficult workshops, is bad practice, placing too much of a burden on the shoulders of one person, as well as too much power in her/ his hands: responsibility which may prove unmanageable by one person alone. I recently facilitated alone (against my own wishes and judgement, but submitting to pressure and persuasion) a workshop with a potentially explosive group in East Slavonia. No apparent ill came of it, but at one point I felt that to have only one person in a position to help the group - and sub-groups - manage potentially very damaging tensions was frankly irresponsible. I shall not allow myself, where I have any choice, to be in such a position again. (And I mean it this time!)

Correspondingly, genuine co-facilitation not only eases the burden of responsibility but provides an important model of power-sharing. Birgit, the course tutor at the Bossey graduate school, said that

she appreciated the way Michael and I made space for each other, modelling, as she saw it, respect and co-operation - which for her was particularly important because we were male and female working together as equals. When facilitators succeed in providing such a model, it encourages, I think, power-sharing both among participants and between them and the facilitators. At the same time it is modelling an approach to personal power which is vital to learning about facilitative and co-operative approaches to conflict. For this reason I was uneasy about working relationships in the core team during the Moscow and Warsaw workshops, which not only felt like poor modelling, but made me question my own integrity in terms of living what I was advocating. On the other hand, it is not bad to be reminded that ideals of co-operation are simply that - ideals, and that there may be many constraints which limit the ways we are able to live them - including our own fallibility.

Not only is the relationship between co-facilitators - and the very fact of co-facilitation - a key form of modelling in workshops designed for learning co-operative relationships and processes. It can also be a model of crossing cultural boundaries, as it was with George and me in Geneva. In Harare, the conflictual dynamic which perhaps came in part from the presence together of a lot of trainers, was certainly compounded by the absence of Africans from the facilitation and organising 'team', which was felt as highly significant, notwithstanding all our practical explanations. By the same token, for me to have worked, as planned, with Cleo, would have been a modelling of equality, and recognition of African wisdom and professional skill, as well as bringing knowledge and perspectives that I lacked.

Note: When I talk about co-facilitation, I am talking about a partnership of equal power, even when those concerned choose some kind of role differentiation (as for instance my colleague and I did in East Slavonia, where I was the chief 'presenter', because of my outsider identity and perceived neutrality, but where she intervened as she saw fit and we made plans and ad hoc decisions together.) Without such equality, in my experience co-facilitation not only fails to model what it is supposed to model, but becomes another burden for the 'lead' facilitator.



### **Elicitive training : respect for participants' knowledge and for my own.**

In Chapter Two I described my training approach as largely elicitive, drawing on the experience and wisdom of participants, but recognised that my own input was considerable; that in the very act of constructing an agenda for a workshop, in my judgements about what is important in conflict, and in my devising and choosing of theoretical frameworks and processes, I am drawing on my own knowledge and understanding. Nonetheless, I do make space, within these moveable and adjustable frameworks for the emergence of a great deal of existing knowledge. During my end of term workshop at the Bossey Graduate School, I made the following journal note:

'I had a fascinating conversation over breakfast this morning with the two students from Sierra Leone. We were talking about healing and forgiveness at the political level and the personal level. Well, we were talking about the inclusion or not of rebel leaders in future governments as a way of getting a settlement. Rosemary and Micah were saying that it was an affront to those who had lost family, limbs, livelihoods through their brutality and ambition. Here again is the question of levels [different social/ political levels and what is needed at them]. Rosemary said those at the top must take into account the feelings and needs of ordinary people. She talked of a sixteen-year old girl who had lost most of her family and her home, and now lay half paralysed because of a later shooting and a bullet lodged in her brain. Rosemary said that recompense, apology and trauma counselling could play an important role in rehabilitating victims, but that the people of Sierra Leone, generally speaking, were not looking for retribution because they saw that way there would be no end to the cycle of violence. She and Moses agreed, however, that the rebel leaders should not be 'rewarded' with a place in the new government. Moses commented that ethical sacrifices had to be made sometimes for the sake of peace.

I learn so much from the people I work with. This is why I have something to offer. The question of reconciliation, of what it needs to try to restore community, is one which I really want to understand better, and my 'knowing' comes from these encounters. Am I a parasite dressed up as a nutrient? Do I masquerade as a teacher when really I am a student? Fortunately I am a believer in interdependence, co-operative learning processes. Still, I feel constantly humbled.'

As I subsequently reflected, and indeed have noted from time to time in my journalings, it is precisely *because* I learn so much from so many people and contexts that I am able in turn to bring their stories and insights to others, and to deepen my own (always provisional) understandings, which in turn I can offer as appropriate.

However, I made a journal note at a recent workshop in Austria (described below) about elicitive training and input:

'Maybe the 'banking' system of education (Freire's expression) is appropriate in some cases. An Indian army officer here is asking for more plenary sessions and less groupwork. "You should lift us up, not let us pull you down." He wants to be given stuff. No doubt he thinks he's quite capable of sifting it. Maybe elicitive education is only one way - most needed for the disempowered.'

I and colleagues were given similar feedback after a workshop for a UK government department, which confirms those reflections.

### **Evaluation of culture: facilitation and challenge**

Making input in terms of offering ideas, new ways of looking at things, is different from making input in terms of judgement as to what is right or appropriate. For that reason, I suppose, the elicitive/ prescriptive opposition (Lederach 1995) is not the best or only way of framing this question. The word 'didactic' has stylistic and attitudinal connotations which I do not like. My 'offering ideas' is more tentative. Whatever the words used, I think the hardest challenge to cultural sensitivity and respect is the one I alluded to in Chapter Two: responding to culturally based approaches to conflict (and relationships more generally) which do not accord with the approach and values of ANV or CR, favouring the avoidance of open conflict, or hierarchically imposed (or 'winner takes all') solutions.

My time in Israel, with fellow trainers from diverse cultures, helped me to reach some clarity in relation to this very difficult aspect of cross-cultural training. I will quote again what I wrote in my journal when I got home:

'From what emerged in our discussions in Israel, and from my own subsequent reflections, I conclude that all cultures are likely to have elements which are both positive and negative in their effect. The value given to patience in Niger helps people cope with relentlessly harsh conditions; it also encourages passivity in the face of gross oppression, including slavery. The strong social cohesion within the tribe and village, the value given to belonging, also finds expression in violent hostility to outsiders. 'Respect', in many cultures, including my own, can signify not only profound valuing and caring, but what to me seems an arbitrary and often misplaced appeasement of those in authority for reasons of gender, age, position or other hierarchical indicator. To me, Western individualist that I am, social norms are

destructive (that is decrease overall levels of human health and happiness) if they fundamentally contradict the assertion that 'all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and in rights'; and if my respect for other people and their cultures prevented me from affirming that, it would have become counter-productive.'

Culture is not something fixed, as a Ghanaian participant in my first Geneva workshop observed, but living and changing in response to people's needs. It is also, therefore, not beyond critique. Monique, at the trainers' gathering in Israel, who said she had taken thirty years to reach some understanding of the culture of Niger, said she honoured its strengths and at the same time saw their negative side. As an educator she considered it her job not to make her own critique, but to offer a process whereby those with whom she worked were able to experience the liberation of taking enough distance from the patterning of their society to evaluate it for themselves. This helped me to recognise and articulate my own objectives as a 'trainer', affirming me in my already existing practice of using processes through which workshop participants can bring into critical awareness different aspects of their life and culture and make their own critique (see Chapter Four).

I do not always have to devise the occasion for such critique. One of the extracts I reproduced in Chapter Six from what I had written about the second Geneva workshop, describes the way in which a powerful debate about culture arose from one woman's choice to define the circumcision of women as cultural violence. One agreement that emerged from the ensuing debate was that culture needed to be judged against chosen values - in this case Christian values. Culture was not to be accorded the right to define what was desirable in a society, whatever the difficulties of transcending it.

I have already discussed above the way I am challenged particularly by cultural assumptions and behaviours in relation to gender. The instances in which I have spoken out, either to colleagues or participants, have been those in which something was happening in the workshop itself which I felt called upon to name - and I realise that naming is not neutral. This issue is the one where my role as facilitator and my role as a woman who feels bound to speak for women become blurred. I do believe that as a facilitator I have a job to draw attention to what is happening in the group; but I cannot and do not altogether want to exclude myself from my observations. I will return to this question in my conclusions.

## VALUES, BELIEFS AND 'THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION'

I have used the word 'spiritual' several times in earlier chapters, without explanation. Since I now want to discuss what I have called 'the spiritual dimension' in more depth, it deserves some, perhaps belated, explanation. I will explain my meaning of the phrase not as a philosopher or sociologist, but as one human being, socially influenced. What I do not wish to denote is some sort of quasi religion. What I do want to suggest is that being human has a level to it which is more profound and fundamental than either reason or passing emotion, and that to ignore that level may be to miss what is most important to participants. The world of values exists at that deeper level. I do not intend here to try to say where values come from, but I take it that their source is multiple. In any case they are a springboard for our emotional responses and reasoning. I would include these deep seated values, and the care and commitment with which they are associated, in my use of the word spiritual. Such values are bound together in belief systems, cultural and religious, orthodox and unorthodox.

The other meaning I want to give to the word spiritual is its use to describe the deepest sense of being and meaning that we have, which may be experienced as profound well-being, or strength, or acceptance, or groundedness, or unease, or fear, or purpose, or disintegration, or alienation. This sense of being is not static and is both specific to the individual and experienced in relation to others; so that group dynamics play a major part in it. When I work with groups, I wish to pay attention to both individuals within the group - their needs and potential - and to the group itself. I want this attention to include their spiritual world, as well as their emotions and their reason. I am convinced that to ignore the 'spiritual' dimension of human experience, its most profound motivations, responses and resonances, is to exclude from our interactions and learning processes elements which hold, perhaps, the greatest power and meaning for us, and the point of greatest leverage in working for change. I also recognise that I bring my whole self to my work, whether explicitly or tacitly, including my own strong values system and sense of self in relationship.

Religion, as I understand it, is one of the ways in which human beings seek to express their experience of the transcendent, and to live in awareness of it. In the Geneva workshops, I saw that for the participants their shared faith transcended their racial and cultural differences; but games, as well as worship and discussion, seemed to give expression to their sense of community and the joy they had in it. In the Balaton workshop, only a third or so of the women attended the morning service, and many were atheists; but the quality of both interaction and atmosphere had a depth and power which I would call spiritual. The ability to cry together was an expression of the women's sense of being linked to each other in some deep way; but our games brought 'into play' another deep-seated energy: a kind of counter-depth or counter-point to seriousness and suffering; a form of deep release, which produced a renewed sense of well-being.

Most of the groups I work with have no religious identity or character, though some participants may be religious. I remember in my Rostov journal wondering whether I was censoring from my repertoire of input the poems and other readings I had formerly used in workshops, by way of offering some inspiration. Thinking about that now, I consider that the games we enjoyed there did enliven our spirits. I wrote in my account of the first day of the Warsaw workshop that the story telling sessions, which had produced nothing very new analytically, were highly valued by participants, who clearly found them inspiring, and I added,

**'It struck me recently that 'providing inspiration' is not usually included in explicit workshop objectives, but that it probably ought to be, if organisers are acknowledging participants' real needs, and that inspiration is very often, in practice, a product of such workshops.'**

This echoed my thoughts after Rostov. Even in workshops where the non-rational has no formal place, the very process of talking about and testing questions which are usually avoided (or safely compartmentalised or sanitised as theory), together with the experience of living together under one roof, seems to bring about an intensified and deepened sense of self and community which could be described as a spiritual experience.

If such intensity of feeling is *only* temporary in its effect, and leaves no lasting trace, it is interesting but maybe not significant. If it is a kind of intoxicant, inducing participants to think pigs can fly - that their sense of well-being will make the world somehow less harsh and complex - then it may be dangerous. If it indicates or represents engagement and change at a profound level, anchored to and not divorced from the realities of participants' real lives; if it provides renewed energy and lasting, grounded hope and direction, then it seems to me an aspect of the workshop experience too important to be dismissed. I shall return to this question in my discussion of evaluation.

I have found the 'spiritual' question hard to express and discuss. It feels very sensitive ground, for me and for others; which it would be. While I believe that to acknowledge and work at this deepest level may be of great importance, I am also aware that it is potentially the most invasive - and therefore disrespectful - thing to do. I work in the name and the cause of an amalgam of ANV and CR, which in their different ways are strongly value-based. As I discussed in Chapter Two, however, ANV incorporates a stronger and more explicit philosophy, which may make it harder, in some groups, to discuss, seeming (being?) more prescriptive.

### **Talking about nonviolence**

In Chapter Two I discussed the strong philosophical base of ANV. It is hard to talk about nonviolence without becoming part of, or alluding to, its prescriptive aspect. One of the effects of North-South power relations, past and present, is that it is very difficult for someone from the West to recommend, or be seen to recommend, nonviolence to those suffering the effects of colonialism. In Geneva and in Harare this difficulty was felt. In Israel there was no difficulty, since we were all pre- and self-identified as 'nonviolence trainers'. The first Geneva workshop had 'nonviolent responses to conflict' in its title and aims, so George and I made clear from the start that an exploration of those possibilities would be our focus; that was what participants had signed up for. However, there was real and growing need for a space for airing doubts about nonviolence, and objections to its prescriptions, and speaking up for the urgent demands of justice.

In a sense it is ironic that nonviolence, being a revolutionary philosophy, with its roots in the revolt against colonialism and racism, should be regarded with such suspicion by those who see the need for revolution. Part of the difficulty arises from the negative form of the word: its association with passivity, and therefore, by inference, the acceptance of the status quo. The suspicion, understandably, is that those who benefit from the present distribution of power and wealth, achieved and maintained by military means, will have an interest in discouraging violence in order to maintain the status quo. This preconception is hard to overcome, particularly when the person seen to be advocating nonviolence is identified as a member of the privileged world.

As I explained in my Harare account, I try not to preach nonviolence, but to explain its thinking; to summarise for participants an approach (which, as I have explained, I always label 'active nonviolence') and a body of thinking and experience which offers an alternative to counter-violence as a response to oppression. I offer this summary either before or after an invitation to participants to come up with their own ideas and experiences of alternatives to violence, and this discussion will itself have been preceded by an exploration of experiences of violence: cultural and structural, as well as direct. I also encourage participants to voice their objections to nonviolence, or difficulties with it. So what is the problem? Maybe the word spiritual has some relevance here, in that the resistance to the discourse of nonviolence comes from a very deep place, and is not to be explained away by logic. What seemed a promised revolt against nonviolence in that first Geneva workshop turned out to be an outpouring of doubt, frustration and grief, springing from the knowledge of violence and cruelty which so many of the participants had experienced at close quarters. Our debate was essential in releasing some of those feelings, and so making way for the expression of hopes and aspirations.

To engage in discussion about alternatives to violence without using the word 'nonviolence' would be to bypass some of these feelings of anger, grief and despair; but maybe they are better not bypassed. To abandon the philosophical package altogether would give greater freedom to discussion, and at the same time would, I think, mean losing a useful framework and conceptual and strategic strength, as well as inspirational resources. My own ambivalence makes it difficult for me to reach any clear conclusion. Inspiration can prove dispiriting when experience seems to

proves it empty. The knife-edge between self-deluding hopes and self-fulfilling despair is a difficult place to walk, and in recent years I have become increasingly circumspect in my hopes. And yet I gained new energy from my time with 'nonviolence trainers' in Israel, finding their commitment both realistic and refreshing, and something I wanted to be part of. In practice I deal with my ambivalence in the same way that I respect participants' spiritual space: by attempting what I have described as a descriptive approach in introducing nonviolence, not dwelling so much on its theory as on its practice, and inviting participants to draw on their own experience and belief about what works for good in the world. The concept of respect serves well to summarise what I feel to be at the heart of nonviolent approaches to conflict; one which serves equally as a basis for 'conflict transformation' more broadly, and which seems acceptable to participants.

## THEORY AND WORKSHOP CONTENT

I explained in Chapter Four that I have developed a range of tried and tested models and processes which I found to be useful and stimulating for workshop participants generally. These include the model of 'stages and processes in conflict transformation', which I have used now in so many workshops with a positive response that I feel convinced of its usefulness. I know too that it has been used by others. It has found its way into two manuals, and will be used in a book to be published shortly. I have also received letters of acknowledgement both from Western professionals and from those living and working in areas of violent conflict. In Harare it was the presentation of this model which, I think, convinced participants, in spite of their resistance, that our workshop was going to prove worthwhile. In the first Geneva workshop I had used it in the opening session to provide a framework for the entire workshop, and subsequently wished that I had done the same in Harare. The other materials and concepts I use fill out the different stages of the model.

My test for the usefulness of any theory or model has been the way it has engaged participants in thinking about their own experience in a new way: a way which helps them feel they have some grasp of the circumstances in which they find themselves and increases their capacity for strategic action - for practice. This was the starting point for my conversation with Friedrich when he gave



me feedback on the theoretical contribution I had made at the Warsaw workshop. He observed that my potentially useful theoretical work needed to be related to participants' own experience. Ironically, the Warsaw workshop was the first (and last) occasion on which I had presented the 'snake' model without allowing time for participants to have a thorough discussion of its relevance to them and the situations they were trying to address. At the very first workshop in which I used the model, at Nalchik in the North Caucasus, just before I began my research, participants were immediately engaged in relating their own experience to the stages described. I often invite participants to split into small groups after I have presented the model, so that they can have a more intense and inclusive discussion.

At the first Geneva workshop, a succession of participants wanted to come forward and explain to the others where they saw their own experiences in relation to the diagram, and at the second I noted in my journal that 'the 'snake' seemed to be useful, my presentation being 'heard with rapt attention and much apparent interest.' The subsequent questions were all about relating the model to their own experience. In response to suggestions made by participants there, I changed the term 'conflict prevention', at the end, to 'violence prevention and conflict management' - which is, as they said, more logical and clear.

I also learned something new at that workshop about the use of the Goss-Mayr models. Several groups working with them came up, in the first instance, with analysis which seemed at once obvious and overwhelming, since the problems they had chosen to analyse were so huge. At my suggestion they then took one of the 'pillars', one group or factor which played a part in maintaining the status quo, and focused on that as the problem to be overcome. Through this process they were able to concentrate on something more manageable, and find that through this further round of analysis they could identify things they had some chance of changing. It also transpired that the process of action planning revealed deficiencies of analysis, which could then be corrected or clarified, thereby revealing new lines of possible action. The conversation between theory and practice must be, as I wrote then, constant - and is exciting.

Since the Warsaw workshop I have developed a brief list of criteria for those who want to think what role they could most effectively play in ameliorating conflict. This list has seemed useful, for instance to the participants in my last Geneva workshop, when I was working with them to consider their options for engagement when they got home. I think that the long and complex list of possible interventions, at different stages of conflict by different actors, which is elaborated in Chapter Two and was presented in Warsaw, is too cumbersome to be useful in training. I recently developed a one page, simple list of different types of things people can do, which then can be related by the user to various considerations, such as the stage the conflict has reached. It has become clear to me that to try to do too much at once in a presentation, whether visual or verbal, is to reduce its utility rather than to increase it.

I have made modifications to my materials as I have gone along, whether to improve on them or to tailor them for particular groups. For instance, I have just written a new version of my 'Conflict Analysis' handout, for work with a development organisation. (Thinking about the relationship between conflict and development has presented new stimulus and challenge for my thinking. The pre-confrontation phase of conflict is closely related to development as such.) I have frequently made modifications to the 'snake', as I did in Geneva, and learned new ways of using old tools and exercises, as I did there with the Goss-Mayr models. I have had groups who used models in ways very different from what I had intended, and have concluded that if they have been put to good use in an unexpected way, that is perfectly valid. They are simply tools. I have constantly made my view clear to participants that models like the 'snake', which represent attempts to depict something of what goes on in conflict, do not somehow embody 'the truth', but are tools for talking about in order to advance understanding of what is going on in the world.

I have sometimes asked myself whether the 'snake' is sufficiently 'true to life' as to constitute such a tool, or whether its depiction of latent conflict in terms of oppression is not in danger of fostering victim-persecutor constructions which are already all too prevalent. The comment of one participant in a recent workshop for a government department, that the first half of the 'stages' diagram was 'pure Marxism' and the second half 'pure functionalism', reminded me of the 'prescriptive or descriptive' question which was put to me in Warsaw. It reflects the different

characters of ANV and CR; but in a 'both-and' approach, I believe that is not undesirable. In the end ANV and CR both embody clear values and at the same time aim to be practical. And the snake diagram seems useful, despite and perhaps because of its hybrid nature.

I have drawn up different versions of the 'stages' diagram, with alternative beginnings. For instance, realising that the 'oppression' stage can also be described as one of 'deprivation', and that 'conscientisation' and 'movement building' correspond, approximately, to 'development', I have in recent work with development advisers added those alternative words to the diagram. But I have reached the conclusion that the quest to devise a model which covers all circumstances and eventualities is a foolish one, and contradicts all the disclaimers in the text which accompanies the diagram in my handout. I feel at this moment that I should let this diagram be what it claims to be: one way of representing one route into conflict; one which can provide a basis for discussion of all kinds of alternatives, acting as a vehicle for thinking and debate. I shall probably experiment with other models in the future, with different points of departure, rather than overload one model.

There is another area for future exploration which the 'stages' diagram has helped me to identify. In its current form, it represents the stage of 'confrontation' in one word, and I have been asked (for instance in Warsaw) whether confrontation always has to take place - whether it cannot be avoided. My reply has been that it can be notional or minimal; and maybe if change has been going on in the group initially described as 'oppressive', while the 'oppressed' have I have been waking up and empowering themselves, that confrontation can be managed largely as dialogue - which after all is the goal of Active Nonviolence. I realise that the Goss-Mayr models include this thinking, by the relationship between the 'analysis' and 'building support' elements; but only from the point of view of the 'underdog' (Galtung, 1990: 293). I want to read and think more (with others) about what semi- and non-partisan actors can do before and during confrontation to help to minimise its potentially damaging effects, and to integrate that thinking with the theory I have developed (with others, eg. in Francis and Ropers 1996).

Simple sequential models (as against 'flow charts', for instance) have the disadvantage of suggesting that the sequence represented is inexorable. The only 'optional' element that has come and gone

from the 'snake' is the bracketed phrase 'violent or nonviolent' in the 'confrontation' circle. I would like to explore more thoroughly the different factors contributing to the degree or absence of violence in confrontation, and the way the activities of different actors are limited or enabled by the nature of a confrontation, and the severity of its violence, once it is underway. My desire to think more about this last question has been stimulated by preparations for a consultation of European 'women peacemakers', which I am to co-facilitate with a colleague from Croatia. The women who have been invited come from a wide range of situations, in which the intensity, as well as the stage of conflict varies greatly. I have been asking myself how that will, and could most helpfully, affect our discussions. If the purpose of peace-oriented action, in the 'confrontation' stage, is to move things forward towards the beginnings of the 'resolution' stage, what can enable that forward movement, given the nature and level of the conflict in question - other than a 'mutually hurting stalemate' (Zartman, 1981). Real-life encounter with particular questions prompts me to engage with existing theory with new eagerness.

I am also currently involved in planning for a 'problem-solving' workshop for people from different sides in the Kosovo conflict. This raises for me in a very practical way not only questions about conflict stages and power relations, but also the question of 'levels' or 'realms' of power and action (see Ropers, 1995), and the way they can affect each other. If second-level leadership is involved in a problem-solving process, how can that change what happens at the top, and can it? These are not new questions, and I have no new answers at present. I mention them to show that the invention of one theoretical tool, and its use in practice, has acted as a stimulus for me to challenge and extend my own thinking; to see that one bit of theory may contribute one piece to the puzzle, and that not only may it not quite fit, but if it does, it needs to be added to by many more. It is new work which challenges me to look for new bits of the puzzle, as it was the needs of particular workshops that prompted me to develop the 'stages' diagram.

I realise that my thinking is stimulated also by current events, as I follow them on the news. For instance, the UK Foreign Secretary's recent actions in Israel/ Palestine, and the response they provoked, have led me to think that it could be better to think in terms of bi-partisan (or omni-partisan) than non-partisan roles. Could the Foreign Secretary have made a more useful and

respectful point, if he had visited the Holocaust Museum *and* the Jerusalem settlement? Is it possible to be both an advocate and a mediator, if the advocacy is for principles rather than parties? Or is what is needed here strong advocacy to redress the balance of past moral cowardice? And talking of the past, is it not past guilt that brings about present moral paralysis - the kind of paralysis I felt in Harare?. I raise these questions here not because I mean to write another thesis' worth of theorising, but because I want to show that all this is theory in action and in progress for me. I shall conclude this section with some particular examples of that process, from recent work.

### **Recent work which has challenged and clarified my attitude to realism and usefulness**

If theory is to be of use, it must correspond in a recognisable, if not complete way to actual experience. It is not only the forms of analysis offered by ANV and CR which need to be realistic, but the kinds of action which they propose and encourage. In the early summer of 1997 I conducted a three day 'mediation workshop', as part of a longer course for 'civilian peacekeepers' held regularly in Austria. The first two weeks of the course had constituted the general training. I arrived at the beginning of the second two week unit, which was described as a specialisation in 'mediation' (though it transpired that no clear distinction was being made by the course organiser between 'conflict resolution' in general and 'mediation' in particular. I was surprised and irritated by this confusion, both because of what it indicated about the lack of clarity prevalent in the field, and because of the difficulty it gave me in trying to discover what was needed from me).

The course participants had already been working on mediation as such, with another trainer: someone with a very specific set of principles for his work and one very clear model of mediation. His sessions with the group had evidently been well organised and had included lots of role plays, which were much enjoyed and had provided very useful learning.

I wanted to use this opportunity also to extend my own thinking and experience. Having time over the week-end for extensive conversations with participants, as well as a brief meeting with the trainer who had run the mediation sessions, I had time to think. Given the confusion over terms,

and in particular about conflict resolution and mediation, I wanted to start by setting both in context, and relating conflict resolution to peacebuilding and peacekeeping. Having understood that the previous week's work on mediation had been very explicitly (but also, it seemed to me, simplistically) value-based, I also wanted to give some time to an exploration of values - often conflicting values - for conflict resolution. I wanted participants to understand that the role of mediator in conflict is just one option: that personal position in relation to the conflict, both strategic and moral, and the values we wish to uphold through our action, all need to be taken into consideration.

Each day one of the participants wrote a report of the day's activities and on this first day of mine it was the turn of one of the most critical and keen participants. I shall allow that report to describe and evaluate the day for me:

"The day was spent with Diana Francis who started by outlining the program for her assigned training days, skilfully attempting to address some of the concerns expressed by participants about the course contents and introducing a flexible program.

Much needed clarification of concepts and definitions such as conflict resolution, conflict prevention, mediation, peace-keeping, peace-building, conflict transformation and conflict management was finally delivered. A brainstorming session led participants to reflect about the meanings of conflict and their implications according to different points of view.

Ms. Francis also made explicit the problem of normative values and assumptions when talking about conflict and conflict resolution by putting in evidence the crucial link of conflict resolution approaches in international relations and the maintenance of a certain international order. Different stages in conflict processes were proposed. Other issues addressed were those of power, of awareness and power, group formation, mobilisation, strategy building, power shifting, settlement and its risks (including power settlement), modification of stereotypes, processing the past, the chances of long-term co-operation and peace maintenance.

Following the introduction of a model representing these issues in conflict stages the participants broke in groups and had the opportunity to discuss the pertinence of the model in relation to conflicts to which the participants are part or acquainted with. The exercise provided the participants with an opportunity to critically review their own first hand conflict experience and to confront it with an analytical tool that exemplifies the complexities and varieties of different possibilities of interventions at each stage of a certain conflict.

After group work in the afternoon participants discussed concepts of justice, mercy, truth, peace, and different implications of various possible hierarchical relationships of these concepts in the mind of third parties. More group work concerning conflicts that the participants knew well was followed by a plenary discussion focused on the difficulties facing third parties with regards with the problem of impartiality. The group work combined the initial model of stages in conflict with alternative personal attitudes for actors and third parties who may be partisan, semi-partisan or non-partisan. The exercise was useful in that it made participants critically review attitudes of different actors involved in conflicts.

Ms. Francis' approach appears comprehensive and far reaching; her readiness to point out complexities rather than fixed formulas and her constant reminder of the relativity of values and assumptions in operation in everybody's mind were combined to deliver a very useful and refreshing day.'

This report, and the writer's evaluation of the day, coincide closely with my own memories and feelings. I was aware of wanting to relativise everything, without losing the idea of commitment to value-based action. I felt I had given participants strong frameworks for thinking about complex things. I articulated in my journal my growing preoccupation with realism:

'I am coming to realise I have become more concerned with being useful, relevant, realistic as a trainer than with anything else. That's superseded other ideas of respect. I see most CR problem-solving methods are realistic at lower levels, but mostly not at the top. [This had emerged from many of the discussions in this workshop.] How to inject some of the problem solving spirit at these higher levels?'

For me, these short days in Austria opened new questions and new territory. And despite and because of my questions, it seemed that the work we did was also much appreciated by most of the participants. Certainly the evaluation, both live at the time and sent to me at the end of their course, was, with one or two exceptions, very positive. It was felt that the theory I had offered was very practical, that I had a down-to-earth approach, but that at the same time I had introduced some conceptual clarity. One participant said that she liked it that I added a 'but' to everything I said: that I didn't try to make things too easy or simple. This, it seemed from other comments, was a general

view in the group. Someone else said he thought my approach was respectful because it was tentative; that I offered ideas, not claiming that they were the only ones, but referring to different theories and points of view.

One of the concerns I had felt after the meeting with women trainers from former Yugoslavia was about the apparent willingness of trainers and recipients of training to present and receive particular 'packages', as complete answers to the problems of conflict, disregarding the complexities and challenges of real-life events, particularly at the political level. Such oversimplification amounts, in my view, to delusion, and is not respectful.

In relation to delusion, I had made a note after the Abkhazia workshop expressing my concern that I had perhaps too unquestioningly accepted participants' framing of their situation and intentions. After the workshop and further conversations with informed outsiders about likely political outcomes to the situation in Abkhazia and Georgia, I wondered if I should have challenged the group in some way about what they seemed to assume was possible - that is their establishing Abkhazia as an internationally recognised independent nation - which seemed on reflection quite unrealistic. I still feel unsure about this; but I do not think I knew the group well enough, or that it would have been appropriate for me, to do other than give them a greater sense of their own capacities and of some different ways of seeing things. Maybe this would have been an occasion to look at the idea of BATNAs and WATNAs: Best and Worst Alternatives to a Negotiated Agreement (Fisher and Ury, 1981). They could then have applied the concept to their own situation and drawn their own conclusions. Was this needed input which I failed to make? Did I fail to do so because I had more regard for my own comfortable relationship with the group than for what was really needed? In fact I think I did not know enough to make such a challenge. I could see that as worrying too; and at the same time I notice that I seem to want to make myself too responsible: too much of a parent or rescuer.



## Contextualisation

When I ask questions or introduce ideas in a workshop, I try to do so not in the abstract, but in the context of experience of some kind. I have at least two rather obvious reasons for this: one is that that is how ideas come alive and get integrated into participants' existing knowledge; the other is that ideas need to be tested for relevance and utility.

There are several forms of what I would call contextualising at play in workshops I (co)facilitate: the context of participants' past and current experience, both individual and collective, as referred to in the workshop; the context of stories and examples introduced by the facilitators; the context (as discussed above under the heading 'experiential') of the workshop process itself, and the specially created context of role-plays and other experiential exercises.

When I am introducing analytical models - for instance the Goss-Mayr 'tools for analysis', I often use an example to illustrate its use and bring it to life; but I deliberately take one from outside participants' own experience. Even when I am familiar with a particular local situation, I feel it would be impertinent for me to presume to analyse it for participants. Maybe this is unnecessary diffidence. But another advantage of choosing examples from very 'other' situations is that participants are not preoccupied with arguing about the 'facts' of the case, and are therefore free to concentrate on the process and method of analysis, while at the same time having the benefit of a real-life story to show the actual usefulness of the analytical tool.

For the most part, this approach seems to work well, and participants are encouraged to hear about the lives and struggles of 'ordinary people' in other parts of the world - even the village where I used to live. For instance, after a day's work in my second Geneva workshop I wrote in my journal:

'The recounting of personal experiences and subsequent case studies constituted two forms of contextualisation, but examples I gave were also readily received. I was touched to find the delightful - and politically acute - pastor from Mozambique copying down my Bathford village example of Positions, Needs and Fears analysis. I asked him if he was going to take my village back to Mozambique and he said he certainly was.'

On re-reading, this example seems also to demonstrate that usefulness can be both cognitive and affective, practical and spiritual - just as problem-solving needs both analysis and imagination. In a recent workshop in Osijek (Croatia), participants were particularly inspired, they said, by the story of the land struggle of Brazilian peasants that I often use to illustrate the use of the Goss-Mayr models. It was on the basis of this inspiration and the subsequent application of the models to their own situation that they made plans for their own group formation and action when they got home from the workshop.

Usually, in workshops where the main focus is on one conflict (or set of conflicts), the concentration on that situation will be intense, and is likely to played out within the group dynamics. Here too the introduction of outside examples can help, by releasing participants from the grip of intense experiences and feelings and enabling them to find a new perspective on their own context. That same story of the Brazilian peasants was felt by participants in the Abkhaz workshop to have been 'relevant and real', not diverting them from thinking about their own conflict, but enabling them to see it in new ways.

In Beirut, however, some participants complained that they had not been given relevant examples and case studies. When I pointed out that we had invited them to apply the ideas we had discussed to their own situation, they at last did so, and I did not think about the matter again for a long time. It was the Harare workshop that made me think again about contextualisation, when the perceived lack of it was a recurrent complaint. My response then was that since I was not African and had no great experience of Africa, it would be impertinent for me to use African examples, and that the participants had all the knowledge to provide their own context. I discussed in my Harare account some of the possible reasons for the dissatisfaction expressed there - which I think were not related to what is needed for learning as such, but what is needed for a sense of being respected. With hindsight, I wonder if the same need was making itself felt in Beirut. Whereas I need to take these sensitivities into account, I think the answer lies more in having an appropriate facilitation team than in any particular approach to contextualisation.

I nearly always devise role-play scenarios with participants, working from situations which they describe, or get them to do it themselves. Often the role-play is based on a case they have already been working on at the analytical level. This method should in theory mean that the role-play is 'real' and relevant for participants; but it does not obviate the possibility of setting up unrealistic scenarios. That depends on setting a wide enough frame. For instance, the role-plays organised by my predecessor on the 'civilian peacekeepers' course in Austria had annoyed some of the participants. They felt he had paid inadequate attention to the wider context of the chosen scenarios, so that the model of mediation he wanted them to use in the role-plays was inappropriate - unrealistic. This reminded me of my own experience in East Slavonia not long before, in which I had asked participants for situations in which a mediator might enable some very difficult conversation to take place. It was only after the role-plays that it became clear that although the conflict situation was real enough, what was highly unlikely was that such people would have agreed to meet and talk in the first place. My framing for the context needed to have been wider. These first- and second-hand experiences have alerted me to the need to set role-plays in their wider context, as well as making them internally realistic, and we went on to develop some exciting extended role-plays on that basis.

## EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

One of the reasons for contextualisation, particularly using participants' own cases to work on, is to help them evaluate what is being offered to them. If one of my validity criteria for respectful work is its usefulness, then evaluation must be important in respectful planning and processes, since it can help to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of what is offered. The first judges must be workshop participants.

I described and discussed in Chapter Four the processes I use in workshops to encourage constant evaluation on the part of participants, and feedback to facilitators so that they can adjust different aspects of the workshop in response. I also outlined the more substantial processes used at the end

of workshops, and the 'need' (often unmet in practice) for follow-up evaluation and follow-up work with participants.

Lack of follow-up sometimes amounts to a real breach of contract, or at least of trust. For instance, while participants in the first Geneva workshop thought they had learned a lot, they suggested that further, regional workshops were needed, as well as training for trainers and help with networking. The workshop had been advertised as a step in a process - not as a 'one off', and these suggestions for the future were asked for, not volunteered without invitation. In the event no follow-up was provided. If, therefore, the workshop was evaluated in terms of its immediate usefulness to participants, the assessment would be favourable; but in terms of the longer term goals of the organisers and some, at least, of the participants, the project did not achieve its purpose.

I feel that too often I facilitate 'introductory' workshops, and do not have the opportunity to work again with the same participants. Mediation skills, for instance, and indeed facilitation skills in general, take a great deal of thought and practice to develop. The capacities needed for organising an effective nonviolent campaign are many and varied. The question of dealing with the aftermath of violent conflict is profound. I sometimes feel frustrated and uncomfortable that I am not able to pursue any of these aspects of peace making in a substantial way. I can argue that I am freelance and therefore can do only what I am asked to do; but maybe I could consider how to have more influence on the nature of the work I do, so that I am not left feeling that something was promised and never delivered. And maybe I can make some input into wider thinking about training and what is needed, for instance through the committee I chair.

Although I have colleagues who consider that being hired to facilitate individual workshops is somehow dishonourable and uncommitted, I think that it is perfectly appropriate for an organisation to provide a continuous supportive relationship with the groups and /or individuals who participate, and for a consultant to provide one-off (or repeated) specialist input within the contact of that relationship. The difficulty comes where the maintenance of that relationship and the provision of follow-up is inadequate because of the inadequacies of the organisation concerned.

What feels best to me is the work I do which is commissioned directly by a local organisation that knows what it wants and how to ask for it.

One way of providing continuity of support is through projects like the one devised by Friedrich, which aim to provide an opportunity for both mutual supervision and outside consultancy, at intervals over an extended period, to representatives of different organisations in a region. (I am now working with another organisation on a somewhat similar project.)

When a workshop is not only a 'training' event, but also an opportunity for members of opposing groups to discover each other at the human level, and to discuss issues that divide them, there is an immediate outcome which can be evaluated. So it was in my the recent workshops I co-facilitated in East Slavonia and Romania.

### **Visible outcomes**

Without some form of follow-up, it is not usually possible to evaluate a workshop in terms of its longer-term impact on the capacity of individuals and groups to act constructively in their situation - rather than simply having enjoyed an experience and felt better for a time. However, sometimes a letter out of the blue, or a chance meeting, confirms the importance of a workshop in some individual's or group's experience. The two participants who had quarrelled and made such firm friends at Balaton both wrote to me afterwards. The Hungarian sent me a card almost immediately when she got home to Novi Sad, saying that she had found inner strength and peace to face the many problems confronting her. Given the cost of the workshop to her, and the situation she had returned to, I was very glad. Some months later, I received a card from the young Serb who was her counterpart. It read (and I keep the substitute names),

*'Dear Diana,*

*I need to tell you a story. A week ago I had a birthday. The postman gave me a card with nice words from Maria from Novi Sad.*

*I hope that you remember me and Maria from Balaton.*

*All the best, Olga.'*

The words were not many, but they were significant to me - as the birthday card, and all it meant, were significant to Maria and Olga.

I have recently worked with one of the Balaton participants, who invited me to facilitate a workshop as part of an excellent project she is now running to help former neighbours face each other again after the war. She told me it was our workshop there by the lake (at which she had been a great help to me) which had convinced her that she could do something to make a difference.

With the Geneva Graduate School, it was good to have the opportunity to work with the students again at the end of their term, and learn how they viewed our first week, after a period of digestion. For instance, when I arrived, the participant from Chile told me how he had written his plans for his educational work when he got home, using all the things we had done in our introductory workshop. I was able, in those last few days, to facilitate their planning of actual projects. It is when such practical and serious plans emerge from a workshop that I feel I have some relatively substantial grounds for hoping that the workshop has really made a difference in terms of external impact. So it was at the end of my recent workshop in East Slavonia, when participants were working in groups with others from the same area, planning what they would do in the coming weeks and months; and new local organisations have since been established. And I have watched the blossoming of the Belgrade 'Bridge' group, seen what a resource they have become in the region, and heard from them how important were those early visits that I and others made.

I received very encouraging letters from two Harare participants, which confirmed my sometimes forgotten observation that in many ways the workshop had gone well. One came from a Kenyan woman who had been an exceptionally clear-thinking and creative (as well as supportive) participant:

*'Regarding my appreciation of the Harare workshop: the fact that it has taken me so long to respond is just proof of how useful the training was.'*

*1. The training exposed me to the emerging area of interest that is Peace and Conflict Resolution.*

*2. It enabled me to gain skills in training in Conflict Prevention and Resolution and I was able to use these skills almost immediately:*

*I was recruited as a bilingual consultant on the Burundi programme and have carried out a Needs Assessment Mission to Burundi, Module Writing workshops in London and a Training of Trainers Workshop for Burundi women. As soon as the embargo is lifted, we should go back for Phase 2 of this training.*

*What has also been very interesting to me was that I combined these CR skills with my gender training skills and was able to do conflict resolution from a gender perspective. This training also enabled me to enrich the work I am doing for UNHCR, training staff assisting refugees by taking age and gender into consideration in planning refugee programmes. I have informally injected elements of conflict resolution in the trainings and I believe this will also enrich the staff's work.'*

The writer goes on to note that she feels she needs further training in trauma counselling and stress management. What impresses me about this letter is the way in which the writer has taken and adapted in so many different ways what was made available to her in Harare - which was just what had been intended.

The other letter came from Mogadishu, and began by congratulating the organisation concerned on their new resource pack, which contained much of my material. It went on,

*'I just completed a workshop on Women's Rights for eighteen women's organisations and I used the [Goss-Mayr] inverted triangle model for analysing violations of rights of Somali women. The application of the model was fantastic and the output was good. Both the participants and I as the facilitator found it very useful in terms of guiding us well through the analysis process. It also vividly demonstrates the pillars of injustice.'*

I want Hildegard Goss-Mayr to read that.

## New energy and new ways of seeing things

Evidence of the 'capacity building' value of workshops is important to me as I try to assess the usefulness of what I do. However, the more immediate effect they can have is not without its significance, and maybe has longer term results by helping to sustain ongoing efforts, or by opening new possibilities.

After the Schlaining gathering of trainers from former Yugoslavia, I received a message from the group in Belgrade, thanking me for my part in making it happen and saying,

*'We are still full of energy and are hoping to be able to spread some of the Schlaining atmosphere in Belgrade as well.'*

This, I think, relates once again to the 'inspirational' aspect of workshops. 'Conscientisation', come to think of it, could also be regarded as a spiritual matter, going to the root of a person's being: her/his perceptions of self and of life in general, and this is one of the things that participants often most appreciate: the ability to see things in new ways. In Abkhazia participants seemed to value above all else was seeing their conflict through eyes other than their own: finding a new perspective, or rather new perspectives. Even the participant who was the most bitter and angry was clear about this, while admitting his own reluctance to change (which reflexivity was also remarkable).

After that early workshop in Rostov I had written in my account:

*'I think what participants did learn was to think for themselves, about conflict and responses to it, with some useful approaches to help shape that thinking, and a sense of the possibility of understanding situations and people sufficiently to begin to find ways into a problem and to unravel it. I think they also learned something, through our whole process, about listening and imagination, respect and empathy.'*

And after Beirut:



*'it seemed clear as we neared the end of the week that participants felt they had discovered much that was new and that opened up what was, for many, a completely fresh approach which they considered highly relevant to their work and situation.'*

One participant at Balaton, giving feedback from her base group, remarked,

*'It's interesting that the things we've been learning have been things we already knew but couldn't use because something in our thinking was stopping us.'*

To find a new approach to something entails standing, to a degree, outside it - with the liberating effect that Monique described in relation the discovery of the limits of one's culture. What I have discovered for myself is that once one has experienced ways of finding new perspectives, it becomes clear that the possibilities are endless. If this process of realisation is begun, or developed, in workshops, then they would seem to me to have been worthwhile.

## RESPONSIBILITY, CONTRACTING AND SELF-CARE

I have discussed repeatedly in my accounts the difficulties of working in circumstances over which I have limited control, and I have often resolved to try to make clearer agreements with employers. Having once (before my work began) experienced very uneasy co-facilitation, I am now careful to ensure, as far as possible, that the chemistry will work and training styles fit, and to discuss the way my co-facilitator and I will work together. I will not agree to work with someone I have not met, unless someone who really knows both of us (and whom I trust) is convinced the partnership will work, and can explain why in a way that convinces me. (Even so, I would expect to meet my prospective co-facilitator for a substantial planning session while there was still time to withdraw.)

Mutually supportive co-facilitation can compensate for a great deal of disorganisation. After our Geneva workshop, George said he had never experienced 'real shared facilitation' of the kind we enjoyed together, and that having met me and planned with me beforehand was what had made it possible for him to cope with the fallout from a catalogue of agreements broken by the organisers.

These breaches were all related to matters which had been carefully specified and agreed in advance, so there had been no absence of responsible contracting: only the failure, no doubt for perfectly understandable reasons, to deliver. It was also for perfectly understandable reasons that my Ghanaian colleague did not want to withdraw at an early stage from her agreement to work with me in Harare, and had to pull out at the last minute. And it was because she could no longer cope with her own stressful situation that the organiser of the Israel gathering decided at the last minute not to go to it.

At the same time, I also have understandable limits, and have struggled with these situations too often for my own health. Whereas I know what to look out for now, I also know that for all the care I take to have clear agreements about my work and conditions, for my own sake and for the sake of participants, and even if I never allow myself to agree again to what is clearly unreasonable - like a week's solo facilitation - I shall still find myself trapped in situations where I have a choice between my sense of responsibility towards others, and my need to take care of myself. I cannot express that better than I did in my Israel account, where I described the multiple selves which I embody, and their often conflicting needs. As I reflected then,

**'I do not exist independently of others, but interdependently - so that 'self-care' is a collective as much as an individual matter.'**

I have somehow to hold these different aspects of self (of myself and ourselves) in balance, not trying to guard myself against life, but trying in the midst of it to take enough care of myself to have something of value to offer to others, and so in turn satisfy myself.

I do now have an inbuilt monitor, which at least brings into awareness what my physical and mental well-being require and reminds me of the need to care for myself. Since making myself ill by agreeing to a workshop in Harare in the same month as the one in Warsaw, I have got a better at insisting on rest between events, though I still have a long way to go. And I ask for a room to myself when I can, and try to go to bed by midnight, even at the risk of being seen as anti-social. Remembering my headmistress at school assembly intoning the words, 'Teach us, good Lord .....

to give and not to count the cost', I know that I do want to give. I also know I have to count the cost.

The psychological cost of my work can sometimes feel high. Over breakfast one day during my end of term visit to the Geneva Graduate School, one of the participants from Sierra Leone was describing to me the horrors of visiting an amputees' camp, and how it was something he never wanted to do again. He described the appalling injuries wantonly inflicted. It was sickening to hear about - as it had clearly deeply sickened him. I wanted to cover my ears, but I knew I had to listen. This is an issue of self-care and self-respect for me. On the one hand I really can't cope with more than so much horror - accounts of violence, torture, mutilation - human cruelty. On the other hand, I think, 'How can I talk about these things if I can't really face up to the reality of violence?' I work with people who in their work or place cannot avoid such things; and yet I am terrified at the prospect of confronting them. Am I just a charlatan? How can I hold together compassion for myself, acknowledging that my own capacity for compassion makes me very vulnerable, at the same time as recognising my need to have a sense of integrity, honesty, follow-through in my work in order to respect myself, and not pretend to know what in fact I avoid? I hope the answer is that I do not pretend.

The last aspect of self-respect and self-care that I want to mention here is money. How much should I ask for my work? I want to be valued as a skilled professional, yet at the same time am aware of the very different standards of living and income that some of my workshop participants have to cope with, and sometimes feel ashamed of what I earn for the privilege of working with them. The dilemma is intensified if I am working with a co-facilitator from a country where salaries and fees are much lower. If they are paid the same as I am, they are paid - relative to their own society - hugely, while I may be paid - by UK standards - very modestly. On the other hand, if I am paid at a very different rate, I feel both uncomfortable in my own mind and afraid of what s/he will think if s/he finds out. I have no answer.

## END NOTE

In this long and somewhat awkward chapter I have reviewed the many clusters of issues that have emerged through my work, and given some indications of the ways in which I have come to understand and deal with them. It is clear to me now, as I near the end of this particular research process, that the experiential challenge of working respectfully, trying to facilitate the living out of respect in workshop relationships and behaviours, has largely overtaken my initial preoccupation with potentially conflicting concepts of respect. The distinction is, however, a false one, since these different, culturally based assumptions lie behind, and manifest themselves in, what is experienced in the workshops themselves. CR theory is about the handling of conflict, and CR workshops, if they are worth their salt, aim to embody that theory and test it. It is my contention that ANV's emphasis on power relations is important, and it has correspondingly been my workshop experience that they are of overriding importance in that testing ground too. It is negative perceptions and experiences of power relations that make cultural differences so difficult to handle. I cannot shift this from my back as I try to move nimbly and sensitively round a group and through its process.

And yet I see that the workshops I have facilitated, alone and with others, have been useful, both experientially and theoretically. Participants have learned relevant things through their interactions, and through lively and relevant engagement with ideas which can throw new light on the problems that they face. To that extent I feel affirmed about the style and content of my workshops. Two years on from the last of my major accounts, and with many more workshops 'under my belt', I have come to accept that I will never work in perfect circumstances, in a workshop which is altogether well conceived, well organised, well staffed and well attended, and in which I live up to all my highest expectations. My tentative conclusion is that I can only assess, in conversation with others, on the basis of available information and in the light of experience, whether a project has a prospect of being reasonably useful; then contribute as effectively as I can to its planning and execution, and do my best at the time.

Not long after the Warsaw workshop I was one of the contributors in two short workshops in Stockholm, and wrote in my journal on the way home:

'Should I just stay at home? I have just had the same imperialist/colonial feelings in Sweden as elsewhere. And yet I feel that as a human being I have something to offer and something to learn in these different contexts; and that in the end people in whatever context just have to use the stimulus and take what's useful to them as the basis or beginning for their own development of ideas, skills and approaches. Cultural differences are certainly a rich source of mis/noncommunication, but maybe different in degree, rather than kind, from all the obstacles involved in exchanging ideas between one human being and another; and maybe, by their very difficulty, they help us sharpen and clarify the things we want to say.'

By and large, my review in this chapter suggests to me that I have facilitated with enough sensitivity, and spoken and presented with enough relevance and clarity, to feel that the balance has come down on the side of helpfulness rather than impertinence. I would, however, agree with Fisher (1995: 17) that

'the value base of ICR [interactive conflict resolution] prescribes that the ultimate form of respect is for the outside professional to provide all the input that he or she can and to then withdraw gracefully while local trainers take up the work.'

## CHAPTER TEN

### CONCLUSIONS

Throughout my thesis I have followed my theme of respect through four strands of exploration. The first strand has been respect as a fundamental value, and the second my own attempt to apply that value to the process of facilitation in cross-cultural settings. The third strand has been the content of my workshops, and my positioning of myself in the CR field; in particular, my search for a way of combining the strengths of ANV and CR approaches. The inquiry process itself has constituted the fourth strand: the way I went about it and its impact on my thinking and development. In this final chapter I wish to review the overall endeavour of my action research, and the understandings and place I have reached. I will therefore consider these four research strands, taking them in the order in which I have just listed them, except that I shall split the process strand in two, beginning with my research methodology and process, and returning in the last part of the chapter to the impact of the inquiry on me the inquirer.

### RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCESS

Given the unpredictable variety of the work I have been asked to do during the time of my research, I am glad that I used such a simple methodology: one which was within my control, requiring no special equipment, external preparations or facilities, and depending very largely on my own diligence. I have been through many cycles of inquiry, as recorded in my accounts. These have made possible some accumulation of understanding, and some comparative thinking. At the same time, the haphazard variety of my work (in terms of gender, geography, homogeneity and heterogeneity, specificity and generality, solo facilitation and co-facilitation - to name but a few variables) has not provided me with sufficient, or adequately consistent, opportunities to learn in a substantial way about specific cultural differences. However, this

very variety has given significance to the recurrence of certain questions, dynamics and dilemmas, giving me substantial material for reflection, and I have been able to show how I have reached some provisional understandings which will provide me with useful guidance for my future practice. I have also tried to show how I have grown, through this varied and substantial series of research cycles, in understanding of myself as thinker and practitioner.

Since I and my role (together with the general purpose of my work) have been the only constants, I have felt most confident about discussing what have been the key issues and dilemmas for me personally, in that role, and very diffident about reaching conclusions, even tentative ones, about the cultural valuing of others. I have not tried to wrest meanings out of situations, or to contain or limit my learning in over-tight frameworks. The process of allowing and encouraging the emergence and proliferation of different questions, and trying to find my way through them, has been at times bewildering. Little by little, however, cycle by research cycle, and through successive layers of writing, meanings have seemed to take shape, and understandings have emerged.

I managed to sustain my commitment to detailed recording and ongoing reflection in writing. I hope and believe that I have met the 'craftsmanship' criterion of validity (Kvale 1995), in the quality of attention which I brought to my work, as evidenced in the content and quality of my writing: the 'thickness' and at the same time (given inevitable selection) the relevance of its detail in describing events, and the layers of overview, reflection and argumentation which it contains. I have wrestled with contradictions and incongruities (Torbert 1991), as well as recognising correspondences and echoes, seeking to identify the relationship between events and circumstances, while at the same time acknowledging that this is almost always a matter of conjecture. I have also tried to do as Torbert advocates in maintaining awareness of my inner world, at the same time as being awake to what was going on around me and the impact of my actions within that context, reflecting on the relationship between these different worlds and my own thought processes.

I think I have given evidence of my vigilance in 'managing unaware projections and displaced anxiety' (Reason and Heron 1996), by remaining alert to my own inner tendencies and disturbances and their potential for distortion, engaging myself in debate and being tentative in my interpretations. At the same time I have borne in mind Judi Marshall's affirmation (1981) of the value of the individual researcher's viewpoint, bias and all. I have begun with myself, my own individual being in a wider world of 'presence' (Heron 1992), articulating to the best of my ability who I am and how I understand my connectedness. I have tried to explore the way I see the wider world, including the world of people in conflict, and my role in that as a trainer/facilitator. I have entered into the world of theory, in order to make some provisional sense of what I see; and I have experimented with this theory in my work. And with each experiment there has been a shift or a development in my sense of myself, the way I see the world, and the way I think about it and act in it.

I believe I have fulfilled the requirements of Kvale's 'communicative validity', in the way I have tested my remembering, thinking and interpreting with others, and my weaving in of other voices. I have been supported not only by the accompaniment of my CARPP group and supervisor, but also by the temporary engagement of particular work colleagues for the purposes of triangulation and feedback. Although I held to my decision not to introduce special research-related procedures into the workshops I (co-) facilitated, for feedback and evaluation, I hope I have demonstrated that the feedback I did receive as a by-product of regular workshop evaluation was valuable and sufficient. This feedback was augmented by spontaneous verbal feedback and letters, and the evidence provided by the use of my materials by others. Feedback is often recorded and reflected on in my accounts, and also in Chapter Nine: feedback on the content of my workshops, the theory underpinning and explaining it, and my own conduct as facilitator.

I have kept under constant scrutiny the usefulness of my work and thought in progress - its 'pragmatic validity'. The usefulness for participants of particular theory and workshop content has also been under constant consideration, and I have reflected on the value of the whole workshop endeavour.



The process of bringing together in one coherent piece of writing all these different elements of material and attention has been, for me, a difficult one. But the struggle has been illuminating. I feel that I have learned as much in the writing as in the action of my research, although the action was the primary source. My learning has not often been startling. For the most part it has come in the form of steady confirmations and gradual revelations, of growing feelings, new angles, strengthened convictions; and at the same time increased tentativeness and wariness of generalisation, and a sense of both the difficulty and the importance of reflexivity. I offer my 'conclusions' tentatively, recognising the truth of Geertz's remark (1975: 29) that

'to get somewhere with the matter in hand is to intensify the suspicion ..... that you are not quite getting it right',

and accepting that the type of research in which I have been engaged is 'infinitely incompletable' (Genks, 1993: 62).

## RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

### Open-endedness

The 'infinitely incompletable' nature of my research, the never-endingness of my questions and reflections, has made it hard for me to reach any sense of closure, or to fix things on paper. And this never-endingness of my questions matches the never-endingness of the potential content and impact of workshops, which leaves me both excited and frustrated. At the time a workshop ends, I usually experience a sense of satisfaction and something accomplished. It is later that the questions start again and the sense of incompleteness is resumed. I want to validate

both feelings and what I think they represent: recognition that the workshops make a difference to participants, giving them new resources and encouragement, and sharpening their imaginative and critical capacities; but recognition also that the work I do can always be improved, and will go on developing, and that each new workshop brings a new opportunity, and is in itself not an end but part of a process, both for its participants and for me.

This, then, is my first and overarching conclusion: that open-endedness (to give never-endingness a more positive construction) is a necessary aspect of a respectful approach to training interventions; that it is necessary to be tentative, feeling one's way with people, situations and ideas, responding to particulars rather than constrained by preconceived formulae and generalisations. This means that although it is possible to learn from experience and from others, the facilitator's knowledge needs always to be held lightly, and open to challenge and change. It means that each workshop is recognised as unique: a new situation with its own circumstances, setting and participants, and therefore with its own needs and dynamics. To bring such an open-ended approach to training, both its content and the manner of its facilitation, is to make space for the endless potential for learning that is present within participants and oneself, and to recognise the endless complexity of human relationships at all levels, and of the nature and dynamics of conflict.

## RESPECT AND ITS MEANING

I outlined at the beginning of Chapter Two the way I understood the concept of respect. It is an idea which leads to whole worlds of philosophy, religion, sociology and politics, which I have been unable to explore within the compass of one research process and thesis. I have confined myself, therefore, largely to my own experiences and thoughts, and the thinking of workshop participants. As I have reflected on the concept and its meaning and complexity, during the past four years and more, I have often had in mind the idea of a musical note, which is not fixed or single, but a vibration of many different sounds around some central core (which also can be argued not to exist - to be purely notional). It is because of the vibrance of

this multiplicity that this musical note has resonance; and in spite of its complexity it is still recognisable to us somehow as one sound, and has meaning as a unity of differences. It seems to me that the meaning of respect is somehow similar: multiple, shifting, and yet recognisable, and full of resonance, in my experience, not only for me, but also for others.

At the heart of this 'note' lie the needs and dignity of individual human beings, their valuing and recognition, their needs and their responsibilities, both as unique beings and as self-identified collectivities. The ramifications of these basic notions, the vibrations in and around this core, are endless. Nonetheless, my research would suggest that the respect note itself is recognisable across cultural chasms, and resonating with deep feelings and convictions in its hearers. It seems to encompass those four other widely recognised and sometimes conflicting values of peace and justice, truth and compassion, which contribute to the honouring and satisfaction of different aspects and needs of human existence. In my experience it has offered a viable way of talking about what is needed in human relationships and in constructive approaches to conflict. For me it has also offered a useful and meaningful way of thinking about my own practice, and the challenge of living my values in action.

Since my research has been concerned with values, the conclusions I have reached have, it seems, inevitably, something of a normative tone. They represent my thinking in an 'if ..... then..... ' manner. If respect is a foundational value for this work, then certain things, in my experience, need to follow. With this explanation given, I will proceed to my other conclusions.

## RESPECT IN FACILITATION

### Power relations and cultural differences

To be open to and to honour what is particular to individual workshop participants, and the contributions they make, remains, I think, the most important (though not necessarily easy)

task for me as a facilitator, and it is what is most easily within my power. However, individuals in groups (like individuals in any community) are not only individuals, but are part of the group's dynamics, contributing to them and affected by them. Workshops involve interaction between the facilitators and a collective, as well as facilitators and individual participants, and respect has to be accorded to the group as well as to individuals. This can present, in any circumstances, certain problems and dilemmas, since the needs and wishes of individual participants do not always coincide with each other, or with those voiced by those who speak for the group.

The exercise of power and authority is at issue here, with the facilitator trying to exercise the power s/he has been given for the benefit of the group as a whole and of individuals within it. I have illustrated and discussed many times and in some detail the ways in which I try to use and distribute power in group processes, through adopting a largely elicitive approach to learning, through the specifics of my own behaviour, and through the use of base groups and other processes for feedback and planning. Openness and open-endedness are key elements in a respectful attitude to participants and to power. However, when the group is culturally mixed, or the facilitator comes from a culture different from that (or those) of most participants, the power issue takes on an additional, important dimension.

In terms of the specific challenges of cross-cultural work, perhaps my most important and unexpected (if extremely cautious) finding is that cultural differences in themselves are far less important than the perceived differences in power which lie behind them. Participants from different cultures in the South and East may at times tread on each other's toes and find some difficulties in communicating with each other, but they are not constantly 'walking on eggshells' with each other. Western participants, on the other hand, may feel uncomfortable in challenging the perceptions and constructions of colleagues from other parts of the world, and those colleagues may find it problematic to be challenged by them. (Likewise, I believe that the effects of power imbalance make themselves felt between men and women in a group, causing not only unconsciously domineering behaviour, but also awkwardness in speaking honestly. I have experienced and observed these things in the past as a workshop participant,

and with hindsight believe that they were in operation in, for instance, the first Geneva workshop and in Warsaw. They were not part of my observations and reflections at the time of workshops undertaken during my research, as this conclusion about the pre-eminence of power relations is one that I have reached, clearly, only during the latter stages of my 'writing-up'. Since the power of the facilitator(s) is already a matter of contest in many groups, the combination of facilitator-participant power relations with West-versus-the-rest power relations is a powerful and potentially explosive mix.

When the group concerned is culturally mixed, and the facilitator's culture is represented within that mixture, given appropriately modest and respectful facilitation, no tension may be felt. When, however, a Western facilitator is working with a group from a part of the world which feels itself to be disadvantaged or humiliated by the West, this understandably has an impact on the relationship. The demeanour of the individual facilitator(s) in question may modify the way participants feel, and the responses of individual participants will vary. Nonetheless, it would seem to me, from my own experience, that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to escape from the effects of geo-political power relations, past and present, and their impact on the feelings and perceptions of participants in relation to the role played by the facilitator. The colonial past of the West, and current experiences of its effects, along with continuing racism and the impact of economic 'globalisation'. To work with a Western NGO with money to spend on a project, which lays down terms and conditions and wants to control who is invited, can be the occasion of an immediate experience of continuing unbalanced power relations. These issues and dynamics often create a barrier of resentment which is hard to overcome, and this has led me to challenge myself with the question of why I should wish to overcome it.

## Motivation

If I do not wish to be the occasion of new affront to the dignity of participants, or to disempower them by a sense of unwilling and continuing dependency, why, and on what

conditions, would I accept invitations to work in such circumstances? I believe it behoves those of us who wish to make a respectful contribution to peace-making, especially far away from home, to examine our own motivation. As Rouhana (1995: 262) points out,

'Parties to a conflict might suspect the third party of having hidden motives such as serving foreign governments, promotion of academic careers, interest in merely examining the dynamics of international and interethnic conflict, rather than resolving them, etc. The third party should be forthright about such intentions. There are also motives that might be subconscious or unconscious to the third party, such as having the thrill of intervening in foreign conflicts, the sense (often illusory) of influencing international events, and the glamour that comes with the role. The temptation to arrange interventions to seek visibility, enhance a career, or achieve personal credit all raise questions about third-party motives'

I take Rouhana's challenge very seriously. I recognise in myself, to differing degrees, many of the motivations he enumerates. Such motivations are vital to be aware of, and they are uncomfortable - as they must be in relation to any 'caring profession', where altruism could be assumed to be the motive. However, I do believe that self-scrutiny and a constant process of evaluation provide as much of an answer as can be provided. Each human being has a need for some sense of personal meaning and purpose, and my own complex of motives need not be damaging, so long as the work itself is not distorted by those personal needs and is of use.

## Usefulness

Usefulness, for me, is the key to this. If something is really in demand because of its potential usefulness to its recipients, that seems a respectful enough reason for offering or providing it; one which could in certain circumstances outweigh the negative aspects of an intervention. The potential users would be the best judges of that balance. However, the benefits on offer may be 'over-sold', so that the judgement is misinformed. Rouhana (1992: 266) quotes Gutlove et al. as claiming for a workshop that 'We gave hope that there is hope'. The desire to

give hope is one of the most seductive and at the same time important motivations for me. One key element in 'empowerment' is the facilitation of the birth or maintenance of hope; for without hope very little is possible. But to promote over-optimistic or downright unrealistic expectations is at best counter-productive and at worst a cruel deceit. To achieve some kind of balance and honesty in realistic inspiration seems a key requirement of both respect and usefulness. (I am both inspired and delighted by the post-Yugoslav playfulness in this balancing, as evidenced by organisational titles such as 'Post-pessimists' and 'Reasonable Progress Party'!)

### Modesty of claims

I believe, then, that respect will prompt those of us who seek to promote either ANV or CR (or both) to be modest in the claims we make for what we offer: not to suggest that we have some magic key which will open the door to peace with justice for all; that violence can easily be disarmed by the nonviolence of those who oppose it; that there are always 'win-win' solutions rather than sometimes, at best, 'not-lose, not-lose' (and at worst, 'not-destroy-each-other-totally-and-allow-each-other-to-pick-up-the-pieces'). To over simplify or over-sell is to insult the potential user and to bring what is offered into disrepute. 'Win-win' goals may be realistic in some contexts, where a really positive process has not been pre-empted by horrible destruction and cruelty. The ideal is to create a conflict culture in which conflicts really are dealt with constructively. In the meantime we either have to confine our efforts to pre- and post-violence situations, washing our hands of the already disastrous and admitting that we can offer nothing; or we have to moderate our language and our claims.

By the same token, I would suggest that claims for the transforming power of training in nonviolent approaches to conflict should be modest also. Even with infinite improvement and expansion, training cannot be 'the answer' to anything - only a contribution to the empowerment of participants. I believe that potential participants should be given as full an idea as possible of a workshop's style and content, before they decide to come; and that local

organisers should choose to be involved because they think the workshop will be useful, rather than because they are under some pressure to do so.

## Evaluation

If usefulness and respect are related, evaluation is vital. As I observed in Chapter Nine, the longer term effects of a workshop are very difficult to evaluate. It would be hard to trace the relationship between contributions made by training to the process of empowerment of individual actors and groups, and to the shaping of political, cultural and structural outcomes. 'Common sense' tells me that such changes in individuals and groups must make a difference; but I also recognise that these efforts are small, in relation to the problems they attempt to help address, and that other factors may overwhelm any impact they make. One cannot control the unfolding of the context in which particular efforts are made. (To take an extreme, hypothetical example, a group of people returning from a workshop could be blown up by a landmine on their way home, and the only outcome from the workshop would be the by-product of their deaths!) One cannot legislate for outcomes - only take well-considered actions and try to monitor their apparent effects as far as that is possible - which is probably only as far as their effects on the individuals and groups in question, and any actions which result from their workshop participation.

Despite the difficulties and limits, it is important for the field that we should push forward our understanding of what such workshops can contribute in areas of conflict, and how their helpfulness can be increased. Judith Large's recent (1997) book about NGO intervention in former Yugoslavia represents one scholarly and rigorous attempt to do just that.

## WORKSHOP CONTENT AND THEORY

Elicitive training and input.



Although using an elicitive and participatory approach to training makes space for the existing knowledge and perspectives of participants, it does not preclude input by the trainer, whether directly or in the process and in the structuring of the workshop agenda. Through our input and through our way of being with participants, and in our entire approach to conflict and human relationships, those of us who work in this field express our values and assumptions, and also our theories. The elicitive trainer puts a value on working as she or he does, and should, I believe, out of self-respect and respect for participants, acknowledge and explain that value, and the wider values and assumptions on which it is based. The ideas about conflict which are promulgated, however elicitive, in these workshops, are intended to introduce new perspectives and wider options, while valuing and bringing into awareness resources already in existence. They invite participants to look critically at their own assumptions and practices, to select from them and expand them. Given that participants come to learn something new (even if that is in terms of seeing old things in new ways) this seems respectful enough.

#### Respectful theorising; ANV and CR; stages and roles

Two criteria for the respectfulness of workshop input, in terms of overall content and specific theory, are their likely relevance and usefulness, and the modesty with which they are offered. I have already discussed the general question of modesty, and in Chapter Four I have described and illustrated the tentative approach I have tried to take in the presentation of ideas in workshops and handouts. The notion of open-endedness applies here too. My theory and its representation have evolved throughout my research, and will go on evolving, as I learn from colleagues and participants, and from my own experience.

The main thrust of my theoretical endeavour has been to bring together ANV and CR thinking in a satisfactory way, in the belief that in combination they offer a view of conflict which corresponds more fully to participants' experiences than either approach does alone, and a more comprehensive range of tools and concepts; a view and a range which embrace the need

for justice as well as the need for peace; which recognise the realities of power relations, as well as the realities of the need for co-existence, the need for tolerance as well as principle, for stability as well as struggle.

As I noted in Chapter Three, outward presentational forms are essential in my work. The search for clear and engaging verbal and visual formulations of my ideas has been important in their communication and use. At the same time it has clarified my own thinking, helping me to see in new ways the relationships between different factors and phases in conflict, expanding and shaping my understanding of the different roles open to various actors. The 'snake' model and its explanation have been central in this endeavour. The diagram has stood the test for me as a way of presenting the complementary roles of ANV and CR. It has, it seems, drawn together in a usefully coherent way, the world of struggle and empowerment of the weak with the world of problem-solving for the resolution of conflict. It has acted as a framework for identifying and examining some of the different needs and issues surrounding conflict, in different circumstances and at different stages. It has unfailingly engaged participants in a re-viewing of their own situations, and seems to have provided them with some 'handle' on how they can engage with them constructively.

The combining of ANV perspectives and emphases with those of CR has brought with it an emphasis on the primary role of conflicting parties themselves, framing the efforts of intermediaries as secondary, if also, at times, crucial. Since I work largely with people who are looking for ways to act constructively in their own situations, rather than in those of others, the attention I have given to the roles of partisan and semi-partisan actors has, I believe, been important to participants in the workshops themselves. By drawing attention to these issues, I have aimed to contribute to their incorporation into thinking within the field about constructive approaches to conflict. The use of my ideas by others, in workshops, training manuals and other publications, would suggest that I have indeed had something useful to offer at this level.

## Future theorising to be done

While I have reached the conclusion that the 'stages' diagram serves well the purpose for which it was intended, I am constantly aware of its limitations. Convinced of the usefulness of theory, and inspired to go on to attempt further contributions, I wish in future to focus on confrontation as the notional pivotal point of conflict, which all too often entails violence, and which often generates its own dynamic. I want to explore and elaborate more fully the ways in which nonviolent actors for change can soften or minimise the confrontational aspect of their action, without losing its effectiveness, and reduce the risk and degree of violence it is likely to occasion. I want also to explore ways in which the transition can be made from violent conflict to constructive conflict handling and eventual resolution. I want to look at the different forms of power which can be exercised by actors at different social and political levels, and more particularly the way the roles played at different levels can interact with each other intentionally and effectively. I want to explore the problems of mediation between complex parties, and the development of peace constituencies. I want to investigate the permeability of the wall between conventional approaches to conflict intervention and settlement, and the alternative approaches of CR. I want to further my understanding of reconciliation and healing.

And so the list grows! Much thinking has already been done on some, if not all, of these issues; but I acknowledge that my research has whet my appetite for conceptual thinking, for sense making; and I am more aware than ever of the slowness of my own understanding, and want to increase it. I hope and intend that any future theorisings of mine will be subjected to the kind of rigorous scrutiny entailed in my research. I also mean to resist the temptation of attachment to my own ideas, and the illusion that if I try hard enough I can one day construct a theory so comprehensive, well honed and thoroughly elaborated that it will somehow represent the truth about conflict! To produce one or two more tools for thinking, which may serve some purpose, for a while, would be fine.

The proliferation of my own learning ambitions makes me see more clearly than ever how very 'introductory' introductory workshops are. One of the disadvantages of combining the ANV and CR approaches is that the resulting combined field seems almost too vast to be addressed. This underlines the need for more extended training programmes for those who wish to give a lead in work for the reduction of violence and the promotion of peace with justice.

#### NOTE

Although I have a powerful sense of the worlds of learning that lie ahead of me, I also feel the increased confidence I have in my own ability to contribute something; not only in terms of conflict theory, but as a practitioner, in relation to cross-cultural training - which was the primary purpose of my research. I shall include as Appendix A a text which I wrote in preparation for a workshop with trainers. They had worked, for the most part, only in the UK, and had been invited to run 'nonviolence training' workshops for the Unrepresented Peoples Organisation': in other words, to work for the first time cross-culturally, and with people faced with levels of oppression and violence which exceeded their own experience. They were eager to meet the request, and at the same time concerned not to make unnecessary blunders in the way they did it. In responding to their request to me for help, I became aware of a sense of having learned quite a lot which I could now pass on; a sense of confidence which, while still tentative, greatly exceeded any confidence I had felt at the beginning of my research. Since my preparatory writing was not done for the purposes of this thesis, it is written in a practitioner's rather than a researcher's voice, with fellow-practitioners as my imaginary audience, and is quite assertive in tone. I include the piece as an appendix (Appendix 1) because it brings together, relatively briefly, for fellow-practitioners, the understandings I have reached about some of the key issues for Western practitioners working abroad.

Having mentioned the development of a newly confident practitioner's voice, I shall move to my final section: a wider exploration of the impact of my inquiry on me the inquirer.

## PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

In my autobiographical introduction I described the personal tendencies and characteristics which might have a bearing on the way I acted and reflected in the course of my research. One of these was perfectionism: the fact that the 'OK' or 'good enough' category had been 'squeezed out of my evaluation frame'. I have tried in the process of my research to find some balance: to challenge and also to affirm myself; to take a critical and at the same time appreciative view of my work and the field of endeavour of which it is but one small example. I am sure my viewing will not have been perfect; but perhaps it has been 'good enough' - like my work itself. But that 'good enough' brings me up against myself again: I find it hard to rest with that. The purpose of what I do is too serious for me to feel that 'good enough' is good enough. However, the best I can manage is all I have to offer, and I can go on working on that best, and letting it develop: through personal experience and reflexivity, through attention to others and the wisdom of others.

Having become increasingly aware of the difficulty of establishing peaceful relationships in areas scarred by the violence of the past, I am inspired by the commitment of those who live in the midst of violence and yet try to act constructively. I have learned to accept that it is necessary to live with uncertainty, recognising the extent of human fallibility, while still respecting human potential. I need, by the same token, to accept my own fallibility, and respect myself nonetheless. I do fail in respect in all kinds of ways. I remember Vasily and blush. But I do not persist, I think, in disregarding or hurting people, and mostly manage to behave as I would wish to, at times when it is most important for myself and others that I should. When I was looking again at the letters which I quoted in the previous chapter, I realised how much affirmation I have received, and how little weight I am in the habit of giving it, still. I want to continue my efforts to appreciate and accept myself, embracing even the uncertainty which results from my failure to do so.

My Western belief in progress will not let me go, in spite of my disbelief. I cannot escape my own inability to accept the world as it is, or my longing to see a decrease in the suffering caused by human choice and behaviour. I hope I can hold together that longing with a reasonably realistic

assessment of causes and effects. I still prefer to err on the side of hope. Have I taken too optimistic a view of my work and its effects? I cannot really know. As I wrote earlier, 'the knife-edge between self-deluding hopes and self-fulfilling despair is a difficult place to walk'. I am not about to despair though. I am committed, in spite of anything, including my own doubt and scepticism, to keep trying, with others, to repair what seems to be broken; to contribute to the reduction of human suffering and the increase of well-being, however local and temporary the effects of that endeavour.

Sometimes, or sometime, though, I need to stop running. My inability to rest, drivenness, is a sign that I have not yet found real balance. The irony is that, in order to finish this thesis I have had to abandon my feeble attempts at self-care, and abandon any sense of balance in my life. I also know the ailment is more than a temporary condition, brought on by a self-imposed thesis deadline. It is part of my perfectionism: a need to complete what can, I know, never be completed. It leads me to drive others, as well as myself, too hard. I am too much task oriented; not sufficiently careful of well-being - which is ironic when well-being is my goal. I will not despair of myself, however. Change happens. In the meantime I can keep reminding myself, making ad hoc compensations and adjustments, and ask those near to me to support me in my quest for balance.

I have realised, among so many other things, that I am a 'both-and' person to a degree that is not restful, and at the same time gives its own kind of balance. I want to be a teacher and a learner, an advocate and a mediator; to fight for justice and care for everyone; to care for myself and to put others first; to savour autonomy and interdependence; to rest and to do a thousand things; to be content and to strive; to act and think both intuitively and rationally; to be a believer and a sceptic; to be the best of myself and the worst of myself. This inquiry which has been, among other things, about balance, has unbalanced me, and at the same time helped me learn how to balance; and now the rest of my life begins. I have no real expectation of losing my unease with myself entirely; but I think I am more aware of its potential distorting effects, and its advantages. I see that living with myself is living with conflict. If that is good enough for everyone else, it must, by my own logic, be good enough for me.

I described in my introduction my fear of 'taking up too much space in the world'; my unease with being 'a leader not a follower'; my childhood sense of myself (never really outgrown) as 'rough, loud and aggressive' by 'girls' standards', according to which I should have been, to use my daughter's phrase (Francis 1996), 'sensible and selfless'. Through the process of my inquiry, I have come to the conclusion that working as a facilitator has given me a way of harnessing my power in a way that is useful to others: puts it at their service and channels it so that it does not invade or dominate. Recently particularly, in workshops where a great deal of fear and underlying hostility have been present, alongside participants' will to co-exist more constructively, I have felt that my capacity to facilitate the drawing out and management of those contradictory feelings - and that participants have felt able to trust my capacity - is of real value. And so I begin to value myself for what I am, rather than in spite of it.

Maybe I am still too afraid of my tendency to dominate, and therefore hold back something which would be of use, decline to share something which would help or inspire; but maybe also I still talk too much at times, or value my own opinions too much. However, this wondering is part of 'my own tendency to self-doubt' which, as I noted after the trainers' gathering in Israel, is 'part of who I am and.... can be useful, protecting me, and therefore others, from over-confidence, or arrogance'; and which, 'combined with the passion that I feel...seems to make for real communication.'

A colleague from Zagreb, who had been at the Israel gathering with me, wrote to me later, soon after my workshop at Balaton. This letter helped me a great deal in my struggle for self-acceptance, and I will reproduce it here verbatim (which means there are some unimportant mistakes in the English):

*'One thing I really appreciate and like about you is that you are never sure are you doing the right thing, but you go and do it - even though there are doubts in you - and it seems to be that with the whole of your being you are all the time searching for better ways and methods - and in the meantime doing the best you can. That permanent searching makes you so completely present, with the whole of your energy, so concerned and ready for any kind of reaction from laughter to anger; and puts your body in never-ending dynamic - of never-ending acting and changing - always taking in fresh information and redesigning your plans. Because you are going through every moment so intensely you can be really aware how difficult it is to give a workshop in another country. Am I right when I think*

*that you felt a bit of fear before the women's workshop in Hungary? Beside the fear this awareness gives you the big pleasure of making risky step - which will bring you a lot of joy when all is over and you float through the memories of a successful event.'*

(She added that she had heard very positive reports of the workshop.)

It was quite extraordinary for me to receive this letter. I recognised the me who was described, and yet I could not without help have seen myself in that way - from the outside. At the same time my friend's description, like Friedrich's later comment, confirmed my own tentative conclusions about my personal mix of doubt and commitment. The picture of open readiness, of moment by moment attention, of 'never-ending acting and changing' which my colleague paints amounts to an action researcher's dream feedback! The way of being it describes seems to suggest I have managed to live, at times at least, the kind of inquiry that Bill Torbert (1991, p. 273) is describing when he writes,

'Confusion and the will-I-am to listen through such confusions are the two legs of my gait of power.'

I was afraid, early in my research, that by developing too much of a habit of reflection and reflexivity, I would lose my capacity for immersion and spontaneity: become self-conscious rather than self-aware. In practice, I think I have gained in both capacity and confidence to lose myself in the moment, knowing that I do not in fact lose myself - only become more awake - and that I can step in and out of levels of viewpoint and engagement as I need to. To know that I have this capacity, and that I can view things in different ways, from different distances and viewpoints, is a kind of conscientisation that can help me make meaning of my whole life, and make choices in it - not just in my work. At the same time, I realise that my research has come to dominate my life, as well as encompass it. When this thesis is complete, I shall need to stand back from it and look round at the world through wide-angled lenses; maybe not focus at all for a while: just be awake and in the midst of things.



I am glad that I refused the possibility of trying to narrow the focus of my research in order to make it more manageable. In the words of John Shotter again (1993) (referring to Wittgenstein):

'the urge in reflection to command a clear view ..... in fact prevents us from achieving a proper grasp of the pluralistic, non-orderly nature of our circumstances.'

On the other hand, as Smaling observes (1993), without any provisional understandings or presuppositions to work on, some defined and helpful perspective, we shall discover less than we might. So I chose my focus on respect, presupposing that it was an important value for the work I do: a presupposition which my research has, unsurprisingly, confirmed. Even my understanding of what respect is remains very much the same, but I have learned a great deal about what it means to try and practise it, and about the particular aspects of my own identity which help or make it difficult. Focus, as Smaling points out, entails some limiting or closure; but without it we can discern nothing. Throughout my research I have had in my mind Henry Reed's twin poems entitled 'Lessons of the War' (1972: 935 - 937). The first of the poems is subtitled 'Naming of Parts' and the second, 'Judging distances'. They explain, more powerfully than any argument, how an inappropriately wide or narrow focus can obscure the understanding of what is 'seen', and can be found in Appendix 2. I shall not be surprised if, when I have relaxed the particular focus which my inquiry has given me, I see things I had missed before, and see 'old' things in quite new ways.

One thing I have learned (with great difficulty), through my research writing, has been the importance of framing, and I hope to apply this learning in my training work, where I think I have still sometimes neglected it. Although I have tried to frame my research focus and thinking constantly for the reader, so that my meanings and understandings are reasonably clear, I imagine that s/he may have, at times, found different readings in the data provided. I have been struck by the way I have constantly seen things from new angles as I have been writing this thesis - another aspect of the 'never-endingness' to which my friend and colleague referred in her letter.

I also remember data which I have excluded (unconsciously) from my accounts, because at the time it was not within my focus - only briefly observed out of the corner of my eye. One such unchronicled half-noticing, which came back to me as I wrote these last pages, was the way the Somali woman in the Harare workshop had explicitly distanced herself from the outspoken feminism of most of the other participants. I have already recorded her letter describing her subsequent work with women in Somalia, using the Goss-Mayr 'models for empowerment'. What I did not mention was that she was also (as I heard from her when I met her later at a conference) studying the Koran with the women, to discover ways in which it could be used to support their aspirations to full participation in society. What I realise from this recollection is that this woman is offering me a model for dealing with culture and gender: one which I can learn from, and had missed until now. I note this here, and the manner of its coming to me, to demonstrate that although this process of inquiry will move on, and its focus will undoubtedly change, it will never be closed for me. I shall still catch sight of things in the corner of my eye which will bring it back into view. And my continuing inquiry will be part of a wider inquiry which goes on in the work and thinking of others. I am not alone in my concerns, goals and questions.

The model of nonconfrontational assertiveness offered by my Somali friend resonates with my dislike - which has grown over the years - for antagonistic framings, and my preference to avoid them if I can. Particularly in my role as facilitator-educator, I feel myself tending towards an approach which, in the words of [Nancy Rule Goldberger et al (Belenky et al., 1986: 225),] emphasises 'connection over separation, understanding and acceptance over assessment, collaboration over competition, and discussion over debate'. Somehow this feels different from the flavour of Freire and PAR: less rigour and more nurture; less analysis and more weaving together; yet still warranting the name of 'conscientisation'.

Another discovery I made in the process of writing and framing was about the relationship between PAR and ANV. I had already noticed the similarity, and indeed had discussed it in Chapter Three; but it was only when I was re-reading the penultimate draft of this thesis that I realised that some of the unease I had about the ideological nature of ANV was mirrored in PAR's notion of false-consciousness, to which I had referred. This also has to do with boundaries and openness. My

openness is ultimately bounded by my values, which may be eroded or transformed, but are, as well as boundaries, the only ground I have to walk on. I want to keep them under my own feet, however - not let them form a barrier between me and others, or roll them out in front of other people as they try to walk. (Often, when the carpet is taken up, we find we stand on the same ground.) I can describe my ground to others, even recommend it and invite them to look again at theirs, so that we can compare starting points and perspectives; but I do not want to judge the standpoints of others or describe them as false. In the same way, I am wary of ANV's labels of 'oppressed' and 'oppressor' and the tacit assumption that 'conscientisation' will reveal, in all cases and simply, who is who, with no room for argument. The kind of 'conscientisation' I want to pursue in myself, and help enable in others, is the awareness - and practice - of the *possibility* to examine one's own ground, and to see in new ways what is happening around and within. This, in Buddhist terminology, is 'the miracle of mindfulness', or of 'being awake' (Nhat Hanh, 1988).

There are, however, human behaviours that I would want to name as evil; actions against which I would feel morally bound to protest. I want to say, for instance, that oppression exists. In a newspaper article, Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1994) said a lot of things that made sense to me, and helped me make sense for myself. For example,

'the capacity to entertain uncertainty need not entail Hamlet-like paralysis. It merely promotes a willingness to revise our beliefs in the light of experience, to extend respect to those we do not agree with.'

Moral relativism should be called, he argues, by 'its real name: moral indifference'.

While I feel the charge of indifference is unfair to many moral relativists (who may be caught in their own logic, but nonetheless morally motivated), I agree with Gates' conclusion that

'We need a liberalism that has confidence in its own insights, a liberalism possessed of clarity as well as compassion'.

Only I would put compassion first, as the motivator and reference point for clarity and action.

As I noted in Chapter Two, many CR theoreticians and practitioners, including me, came into the field from a background in the protest movement, in the USA and Europe, in the nineteen sixties and seventies. Maybe my own journey has been part of my motivation, in the conceptual and theoretical part of my work, for trying to bring together active nonviolence and conflict resolution, my need to demonstrate that there is a vital role for advocacy as well as impartiality in peacemaking. I realise that as I have grown older I do not see things so clearly in moral terms; and at the same time I do want to lose the moral energy of my youth. Advocacy does not have to mean disrespect for anyone: only a choice to speak up for human rights and human dignity, and for approaches and processes which enable their affirmation. Sometimes a judgement has to be made as to what is intolerable, that is, beyond tolerance; and I, unreconstituted Westerner that I am, believe the moral responsibility for such judgements lies with each individual human being.

Having reacted in this thesis against the CR field's preoccupation with mediation and impartiality, and insisted on the importance of advocacy, I recognise that in my work I play a 'neutral third party role'. My main advocacy as a trainer is properly related to process. My advocacy of values comes through the framing assumptions of my workshops, rather than through overt missionising. It feels important to my integrity now that I should return, in part at least, to more whole-hearted advocacy roles, at home in my own society: do more to 'put my own house in order'. That involves being a bridge-builder at home too. Both-and.

During the course of my research, I have often longed to take a stronger line as a woman, for women. Knowing the severity of the abuse of women in many societies has made it hard for me to know how to measure my response in situations of relatively subtle discrimination, and has sometimes made me wonder whether I should not abandon my role as 'impartial intervener' in training, and become instead a partisan supporter, working largely with women-only groups. And yet I am committed to the process-related work I do, which seeks to go to the heart of dominatory patterns of relationship and behaviour, and to transform them. In the end I will probably not make a

choice, but go on responding to invitations as they come, whether they are to work with women or with mixed groups.

In all the work I do and all the choices I make, I act both as an individual and as an interdependent being, shaped by my context. No-one lives outside culture, any more than outside the universe. Our most elemental concepts - words themselves - are culturally formed and forming. But as Eva Hoffman says (1991: 274), 'Perhaps any language, if pursued far enough, leads to the same place.' She, having lived in two very different cultures, affirms the discovery of a part of herself which is 'unassimilable'. Culture is neither unitary nor fixed. It need not be a prison which locks us in, preventing change and exchange. We can, to a degree at least, be aware of it, question its norms and change it. To question it need not imply disintegration, personal or collective. We do not need an outer carapace to confine us and hold us in some shape, having an inner skeleton to which our flesh adheres, which maintains our form and enables us to move. In the same way we may develop a core of identity and motivation - a combination of the values, assumptions, perspectives, expectations, knowledge, tendencies and emotions which are developed through the interaction between our givenness and all other givens - which can hold us together, provide us with direction, and help us to orientate ourselves in relation to the seemingly endless choices we are obliged to make. They can help us to live the challenge and the dignity of human responsibility, to maintain a sense of open, undefended autonomy which includes the recognition of interdependence and embraces participation. It is on this understanding that I have engaged with my research, looking inward as well as outward, talking to myself and talking with others, acting and reflecting.

To quote Gates (1994) once more,

'The politics of identity starts with the assertion of a collective allegiance .... It is about the priority of difference, and while it is not, by itself, undesirable, it is - by itself - dangerously inadequate.

By contrast, what I am calling humanism starts not with the possession of identity, but with the capacity to identify with. It asks us what we have in common, while acknowledging our diversity. It is about the promise of a shared humanity. In short, the challenge is to move from a politics of identity to a politics of identification.'

Although Gates uses the word humanism, that affirmation of shared humanity runs like a golden thread through all the world's major religions. It is the basis of the 'golden rule', of which every religion has its own version. It is the fundamental recognition which I have called respect, and on which I have based my inquiry. Despite its complexities, it has stood me in good stead.

Moustakas (1981: 11) wrote:

'In the process of heuristic research, I may challenge, confront, or even doubt my understanding of a human concern or issue; but when I persist in a disciplined and devoted way I ultimately deepen my knowledge of the phenomenon.'

Where does my research leave me? It leaves me unable to stop the process I have begun: which was not a new process, since I have always noticed and questioned and argued, but is one which has been greatly intensified in the past four years. It is a process which I can never now abandon: an addiction, almost. Maybe the habits I have developed will be modified over time: become more relaxed or intermittent, lose their edge. But the level of awareness that I have acquired is one from which I feel there is now no escape.

To put it the other way round, it is like having left a garden (an image with a long history, which I have used before) and found a world outside it. I may be able to come and go, but I can never be in that garden again without the knowledge of what exists outside: both a world of other ways of seeing life, and a universe of endless layers of reflection. I want to enjoy this knowledge, to see it as a capacity and not a loss or encumbrance. Having lost the incentive and the framework of this inquiry and my participation in the CARPP programme, with all the support it has given me. I realise that I shall need to find a new form and forum for processing my future working and thinking.

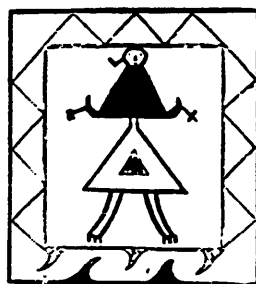
My research leaves me with a deeper respect for the complexities of respecting, and has alerted me to assumptions and relationships - particularly related to power - which can get in its way. I have

become more diffident, I think (though to do myself justice, I did already try to guard against over-knowing behaviour). But I have also come to accept that I am who I am: a white, middle class, middle aged, British and female human being. I claim equality with other human beings, and will respect my power and my responsibility, which are both huge and minute. I have no intention of denying the values which give meaning to my life and motivate my work. They are at variance with many aspects of the society in which I live, and I often fall short of them myself, yet I affirm them. I am more than ever aware of the pitfalls and limits of the work I do, more than ever determined to avoid false claims and too large expectations. At the same time I am confirmed in feeling that I am part of a field, a movement, which has something to offer, which is unlikely to be harmful if offered with humility, and quite likely to make a contribution to the processes by which people grow into a greater understanding of their own power to make a difference in the world.

## END PIECE

I am a both-and person in relation to the way I think and communicate. I like to use both words and images (not that they are so distinct). They both help me to understand the world and myself in it. My thesis is made up of words. However, as I was still toiling on the final version, with the end just about in sight, I was browsing through an 'Encyclopaedia of Patterns and Motifs' and came upon an image in which I suddenly and powerfully recognised myself. The recognition did not relate to the wolf-like features of the figure portrayed, nor to the fact that (as I discovered from the accompanying text) the figure represented a Mayan god. What I saw was a *being*, weighed down, encumbered, by the multiplicity of things it was trying to carry, both in its hands and on its person. It looked beleaguered and a little doubtful, but bravely determined. That was how I felt at the time, and at many times on my research journey. So I labelled the poor creature's encumbrances with some key words from my multiplicity of concerns and placed it at the beginning of this thesis.

Then, a few pages later in the book of patterns and motifs, I found a small and simple image of a woman. She looked both lively and still, standing with her feet apart, grounded but not weighed down. All she is holding is a cross in one hand and some kind of an implement in the other. I did not know what these symbolised; but to me the cross suggested belief and spiritual groundedness, and the tools denoted practical competence. Both seemed to be held lightly and with joy. I hope through my journey to have reached a point where I can stop feeling encumbered by the baggage of my many questions, and to have emerged as no more nor less than a woman with some grounding and some useful tools for my own practice and to share with others. I therefore let this woman stand in the final place.





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## APPENDIX 1

### 'CULTURE, VALUES AND RESPECT IN TRAINING

#### **The workshop culture**

The workshop style of learning, which is largely participatory, elicitive and experiential, runs counter to most cultures and represents an 'alternative' approach to education. In its informal, egalitarian style and ethos, it is a model of the values and the kinds of process embodied in 'alternative' approaches to conflict. Participants for whom this kind of learning is new are often unsettled, occasionally resistant, to begin with; but usually enthusiastic by the end. Their participation is voluntary (except when it is part of a longer course, or required by employers - in which case the workshop constitutes a counter-hierarchical experience arising from a hierarchical context - which can create some interesting dynamics!).

The very process of bringing things into awareness, of naming and problematising (which is also the process of my research), is culturally laden. It is closely related to the attitude to conflict which informs this whole field of approaches to it: an attitude which constructs conflict not as an evil to be overcome, hidden or otherwise avoided, but as simply a part of life which is particularly related to difference and change, which in turn are to be valued. What matters is that conflict should be recognised and dealt with constructively: that is, in such a way as to minimise its destructive potential and maximise the chances that it will have positive outcomes. This entails bringing the conflict into the open in order that it can be addressed.

The workshop process embodies this attitude to conflict in valuing openness in expressing differences; bringing into awareness and naming things more often left in the realm of unexpressed feelings and tacit positions. Although these working assumptions about conflict, which are mirrored in the workshop process, are foreign to some cultures, I have not found participants from any culture I have worked with unwilling participants or, by the end of the workshop, critical of its fundamental framing and approach. It is, of course, quite possible that some are reserving judgement, or keeping silent out of politeness, but it has not been my impression that any were



feigning goodwill in their participation. Furthermore, workshops are brief events, and participants are free, in the end, to take anything they find useful and leave the rest.

While the values and style of this kind of workshop embody in themselves all kinds of cultural challenge, they also, if they are offered in a spirit which is consonant with the approach which they represent, constitute the greatest protection against cultural disrespect or arrogance, since they make space for the valuing of different viewpoints, experiences and insights, and model respect and recognition. And through this form of exchange, I am constantly enriched and changed.

### **Challenging cultural norms**

Hierarchical approaches in general, and attitudes to gender in particular, have constituted the most challenging issue for me in my cross-cultural work - as I believe they would if I were working largely within my own mainstream culture in the UK. Through the workshop process itself, I am able to bring into question, or counteract in small ways, tendencies and statements which support domination, by pointing out what is happening when it occurs within the group. I can create spaces in which timid voices can be heard, and spaces to try out new ways of thinking and behaving. This for me is a way of maintaining my own integrity and respecting my own values, the most fundamental of which is the equal valuing of all human beings. I do not want that value to lead me into insensitive or arrogant behaviour, or to attempt to impose my views on others - which would in any case be a fruitless endeavour. On the other hand, I have continuing difficulties with the good sense of my own conclusions, seeing, as I do, that oppression by gender is the red thread of the transcultural culture of domination which I see as being the cause of untold present suffering and degradation, and in great and urgent need of transformation.

While gender-related norms and behaviours have represented the most constant challenge to my values, attitudes to identity which are strongly focused on ethnicity also sit uneasily with a more broadly humanistic point of view. During the party political campaigning for UK elections in the earlier part of 1997, with all its 'banal nationalism' (Billig 1995) and worse, I suddenly felt that I had, in my frequent work with nationalist groups in post-communist countries, been suppressing my own dislike and mistrust of nationalism. I had suppressed it out of respect for members of those groups as people, and because I respected the reasons why they had turned to nationalism: the identity vacuum they found themselves in; the political and economic chaos of which they had been victims; their need for an understanding of who they were: for self-respect. I was also aware of the way the communist regimes had used and abused nationality issues for their own purposes, laying the ground for nationalist movements by those very measures designed to control them. Nationalism in these circumstances is a way of fighting back psychologically, of affirming oneself as a person, and at the same time feeling the support of a heightened sense of belonging. But it is also the tool of demagogues, wielded for their own power, and can lead to new injustice and new victims - as, for instance, many Russians in post-communist states, for instance, could witness.

The hurts of the past distort the role of belonging, encouraging dependence on hostility for a sense of well-being, reliance on victimhood for a sense of dignity and strength. This syndrome is present also in South-North relationships - was at work, for instance, in the Harare workshop - and in racist and anti-racist movements. It is sometimes present also in gender relations. Maybe there is a time when such responses are inevitable - even a necessary stage to be gone through; but I want to believe they can in time be transcended, once the underlying needs of identity and meaning are met, and that truly tolerant, mutually affirming relationships can be forged.

Is it possible to have identification without rejection, belonging without imprisonment and exclusion? I have a mental image of a magnetic centre, which represents the things which holds a group together: a sense of shared identity, values and perspectives which draws and provides anchorage for those grouped around it, so that there is no need for an outer boundary to hold them in, which would limit their coming and going and tend to exclude

others.

My approach has been to try to bring these questions into awareness; to offer processes for participants to recognise that their identities are multiple and complex, and to examine their attitudes and assumptions in relation to their own espoused values, considering their impact on others; so providing the opportunity for both affirmation and adjustment. The use of exercises which enable participants to put themselves in the shoes of others, to see a situation through different eyes, helps to keep the boundaries of belonging permeable, to bring alive the knowledge of shared belonging to the human race; to bring into play, implicitly, the fundamental value which is present in the fabric of all the religions and cultures I know about - that we should do as we would be done by. In work I have done since I wrote my major accounts, in Abkhazia and Croatia, I have realised that to enable an empathic shift in people's thinking is something important to achieve; and at the same time I have been left with the knowledge that I simply do not share the enthusiasm of some participants for the nation state as a means of expressing the dignity of peoples. Those who see it as vital have their own understanding and experience of history, and are entitled to their view. I want to understand and respect their purposes and motivations, at the same time as helping them to examine and clarify them, and to look at the values behind them.

While gender and ethnic identity have constituted important issues in workshops I have facilitated, the widely noted difference between the South and East on the one hand, and North and West on the other, in terms of emphasis on collective needs and rights and those of the individual, has not, in practice, seemed to present much of a problem. Both ANV and CR (with the exception of some of the more individually focused versions of ADR) are concerned with action at the socio-political level, as well as the rights and responsibilities of individual actors - so that this dichotomy is not felt. That is not to say that there is no possibility of argument along these lines; only that I have not experienced it. On occasions when tradition and collective 'need' to affirm cultural identity have been adduced to justify what by others is regarded as a violation of human rights (as in the case of female circumcision), the argument has taken place between different members of the same cultural group.

I have noticed how little 'body language' has featured in my records and reflections. That may be in part because I have not encountered any of the more important cultural differences in my work. I give it not much more than a passing mention when I am running sessions on communication - for instance (in Geneva) to warn against the blanket assumption that to 'maintain eye contact' is a necessary sign of attention; or that touching is or is not reassuring or offensive. It is my experience that attitudes are communicated in ways more numerous and subtle than we can be aware of or control, and that more or less deliberate forms of expression, by word or other sign, will be effective if they are further expressions of those attitudes. I doubt how well we can fake respect, or disguise the lack of it. Equally, I think the danger of causing real offence through some cultural blunder is not as great as we sometimes fear; witness the forgiveness for my toasting blunder in Abkhazia. Certainly subtle differences, for instance in the frequency with which courtesy expressions like 'please' or 'thank you' are used, or degrees of bluntness, can contribute to the creation of 'false' impressions or misunderstandings; but such subtleties of style and interpretation are a matter of personality as well as culture, and we manage them regularly by drawing on wider indicators, such as other aspects of a person's behaviour.

I do not wish to suggest that cultural norms in matters such as dress, body contact, eating, drinking or smoking should be ignored; only that if one shows a *will* to respect customs, no offence is likely to be given by inadvertent mistakes. I have come to the conclusion that communication is more robust - as well as more precarious and incomplete - than one might rationally expect.

Working across languages brings its own difficulties, and at the same time serves as an important reminder of the differences that lie behind language. It calls for extra time, clear speaking, practical care and, above all, acknowledgement. I try never to take for granted the efforts of others to communicate with me in English, but to recognise them explicitly and with thanks.

### **Respect and the 'missionary' problem**

I believe that attitude (and by attitude I mean something profound - not superficial posture) is the key to showing respect, rather than detailed knowledge of different cultures and customs. It is perhaps also the key to the 'missionary' dilemma. How do I and others like me square our claims not to wish to impose our views and approaches on others, with the fact of our travelling to faraway - sometimes even a little dangerous and uncomfortable - places, to engage people in strange processes and present them with new-fangled ideas? For we do present, even while we elicit. We present ourselves, our way of seeing things, our attitudes and our agenda. And although we (or those who employ us) may take care to work with local partners, and run workshops at their invitation, we are willing, if not eager, to be asked and make ourselves available. In some cases the organisations I work for have made themselves known to 'local partners' in the first place, letting them know they had something they might find useful. As a freelancer I am not involved in self-advertisement, often responding to requests direct from organisations local to the proposed workshop; but sometimes I work for organisations based in London or elsewhere in western Europe. If dialogue with local partners is instigated from the outside, I believe respect requires that it should be done tentatively, and on the basis of indications that there is a need which could be met in some way by the kind of workshop being offered. If there is no shortage of local resources, this is unlikely to be the case, unless having someone from outside the situation is important per se. If training workshops seem to be useful, contributing to the development of local training capacities would seem to be important.

To me there seems to be all the difference in the world between imposing and offering. I think I really do not wish to impose; not even, on better days, to persuade; but I do have a sense of mission. I am a missionary for opportunity. I want people, whatever their culture, to have a bit more of an option about how to address some of the hardest issues in their lives; more of a sense that there are options. Above all, I want them to find, or to experience more fully, that there are choices to be made - even in the worst of circumstances. If in wanting those things I lose sight of my own blindness, or assume some kind of superiority, or forget that I have in most ways had a privileged and easy life and have everything still to learn, then I have forgotten respect - as I am sure I sometimes do. But I do not believe that the mission itself is disrespectful. The values that I carry with me, of inclusiveness and respect, my longing to reduce suffering and to promote co-

responsibility, are values and motivations which I share with participants. They are what has brought us together.

### **Violence and nonviolence**

The place of violence and nonviolence in addressing injustice is one of the most sensitive and contested issues within most contexts of perceived oppression and violent conflict. Sometimes the fact that people resort to violence is a sign that civilising values have been overwhelmed by other forces; but sometimes it results from an overriding commitment to some value which those who are fighting have a passionate desire to uphold. If alternatives to violence are under discussion, the presentation of the alternative approach needs to be done with sensitivity, nonjudgmentally, and with humility. This is especially important when the presenter is someone from the dominant world culture, on the dominant side of the world economy, an inheritor of the benefits which were established from the spoils of colonialism, and a speaker of the language of colonialism, which has now colonised most of the world. As a matter of fact, if not of choice, those of us in the UK who are 'white' and middle class bear the legacy of colonialism, and benefit from its current forms. If we are not mindful of this, we will be reminded. And whereas I see it as my task in a workshop to work within the initial frame of exploring nonviolent approaches, I do not want that to prevent participants from challenging that frame. At the same time I realise that in choosing to facilitate the workshops I do, I am following my own values and convictions. I would not be willing to facilitate workshops for devising military strategies, though I would not question the right of others to do so.

### **Different aspects and levels of respect; respect as a 'spiritual' matter**

Sometimes all or most participants have a religious frame for their deepest understandings and values. Sometimes they do not; but they will have some base line against which they are able to evaluate different elements and options in their circumstances. The concept of respect contains within it competing elements which have to be held, as it were, in dialogue

with each other - like the dialogue between Mercy, Truth, Peace and Justice in the Lederach exercise. Maybe the different forms of respect are quite close to those four values, and might be expressed as compassion or care, honesty, tolerance and justice (for which I can find no more appropriate synonym). Whatever the words, I want to reflect in the content of my workshops the complex and competing demands of respect, and to avoid simplistic formulae which ignore major aspects of participants' experience. I am confirmed in the position I took in Chapter Two in asserting that one aspect of the complexity of thinking and acting in relation to conflict is the need to embrace attention both to the role of individual behaviour and to collective dynamics and geopolitical structures.

I am also confirmed in thinking that it is unrealistic, rather than realistic, to think that only practical, political considerations can and should be included in problem-solving processes. Throughout my work with people in conflict, it has been evident that the world of emotions is a powerful one: probably far more powerful than the world of reason. If hatred and fear remain unabated, a problem-solving process will be impossible to conduct. Moreover, the need for dignity is a powerful need. Respect, as in recognition of common humanity, not only accords a degree of dignity to the other, and a recognition of needs; it also limits the fear which comes from demonising (while by no means removing realistic fear, based on actual experience). It is also the only guideline I can hold on to in trying to honour the dignity and sensitivity of participants who are still hurt by colonialism, past and present, while at the same time not apologising for who I am and what I have learnt.

Honour and dignity, and the sense of well-being in the world with which they are associated, can be understood as fundamental human needs. Attention to them in workshops, like attention to participants' physical needs, can, I think communicate respect in a way which goes deeper than words. This is something I have so often tried to express in these pages, I fear without success. Perhaps, too, my evidence is inadequate. But I still cannot ignore it. I believe that deep and genuine respect will be felt, as will the lack of it. Such respect is nothing to do with liking or agreeing with, but perhaps can be described in terms of taking seriously and caring for in a very fundamental way. Such respect is not easy, as the whole business of responding constructively to conflict is not easy.

But it brings its own joy, or love, at moments of recognition - the more so when it is

difficult because of some personal antipathy or disagreement.

Since human dynamics of this kind are so important, I believe that training needs to recognise this level of human being and interacting, if only tacitly, and to include work to develop imaginative understanding, emotional awareness and interpersonal skills, as well as analytical and strategic thinking with a practical focus.'

#### NOTE

I did not discuss in this piece the question of inspiration and its importance (or unimportance). However, it remains as an issue for me. A colleague recently showed me a list that had been compiled within a CR organisation of the books which had been most important to its staff and board members. The great majority of the titles were not of academic works but the writings of idealists, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, poets like Wilfred Owen, and Buddhist and Christian writers from the anti-war and nonviolence movements.



## APPENDIX 2

### HENRY REED

1914-

#### Lessons of the War

*Vixi duellis nuper idoneus  
Et militavi non sine gloria*

(i)

#### *Naming of Parts*

TO-DAY we have naming of parts. Yesterday,  
We had daily cleaning. And to-morrow morning,  
We shall have what to do after firing. But to-day,  
To-day we have naming of parts. Japonica  
Glistens like coral in all of the neighbouring gardens,  
And to-day we have naming of parts.

This is the lower sling swivel. And this  
Is the upper sling swivel, whose use you will see,  
When you are given your slings. And this is the piling swivel,  
Which in your case you have not got. The branches  
Hold in the gardens their silent, eloquent gestures,  
Which in our case we have not got.

This is the safety-catch, which is always released  
With an easy flick of the thumb. And please do not let me  
See anyone using his finger. You can do it quite easy  
If you have any strength in your thumb. The blossoms  
Are fragile and motionless, never letting anyone see  
Any of them using their finger.

And this you can see is the bolt. The purpose of this  
Is to open the breech, as you see. We can slide it  
Rapidly backwards and forwards: we call this  
Easing the spring. And rapidly backwards and forwards  
The early bees are assaulting and fumbling the flowers:  
They call it easing the Spring.

They call it easing the Spring: it is perfectly easy  
If you have any strength in your thumb: like the bolt,  
And the breech, and the cocking-piece, and the point of balance,  
Which in our case we have not got; and the almond-blossom  
Silent in all of the gardens and the bees going backwards and forwards,  
For to-day we have naming of parts.

(ii)

*Judging Distances*

NOT only how far away, but the way that you say it  
Is very important. Perhaps you may never get  
The knack of judging a distance, but at least you know  
How to report on a landscape: the central sector,  
The right of arc and that, which we had last Tuesday,  
And at least you know

That maps are of time, not place, so far as the army  
Happens to be concerned—the reason being,  
Is one which need not delay us. Again, you know  
There are three kinds of tree, three only, the fir and the poplar,  
And those which have bushy tops to; and lastly  
That things only seem to be things.

A barn is not called a barn, to put it more plainly,  
Or a field in the distance, where sheep may be safely grazing.  
You must never be over-sure. You must say, when reporting:  
At five o'clock in the central sector is a dozen  
Of what appear to be animals; whatever you do,  
Don't call the bleeders *sheep*.

I am sure that's quite clear; and suppose, for the sake of example,  
The one at the end, asleep, endeavours to tell us  
What he sees over there to the west, and how far away,  
After first having come to attention. There to the west,  
On the fields of summer the sun and the shadows bestow  
Vestments of purple and gold.

The still white dwellings are like a mirage in the heat,  
And under the swaying elms a man and a woman  
Lie gently together. Which is, perhaps, only to say  
That there is a row of houses to the left of arc,  
And that under some poplars a pair of what appear to be humans  
Appear to be loving.

Well that, for an answer, is what we might rightly call  
Moderately satisfactory only, the reason being,  
Is that two things have been omitted, and those are important.  
The human beings, now: in what direction are they,  
And how far away, would you say? And do not forget  
There may be dead ground in between.

There may be dead ground in between; and I may not have got  
The knack of judging a distance; I will only venture  
A guess that perhaps between me and the apparent lovers,  
(Who, incidentally, appear by now to have finished,)  
At seven o'clock from the houses, is roughly a distance  
Of about one year and a half.